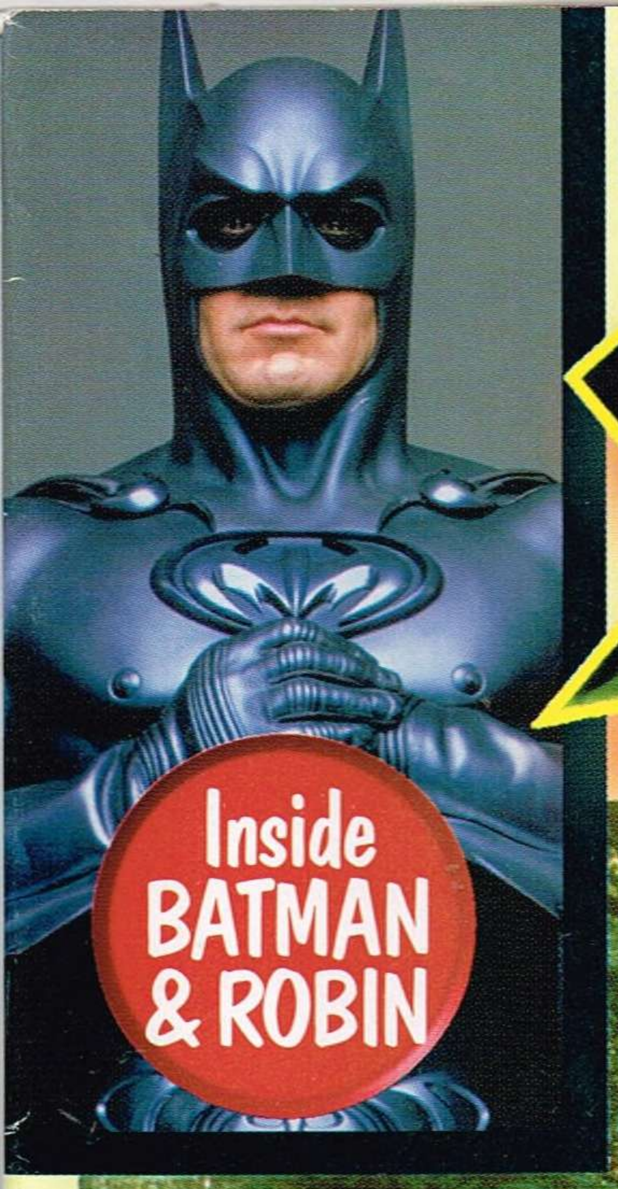

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DESIGNED TO CHILL

By MARC SHAPIRO

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Veteran production designer Barbara Ling has crafted a nightmarish new Gotham for *Batman & Robin*.

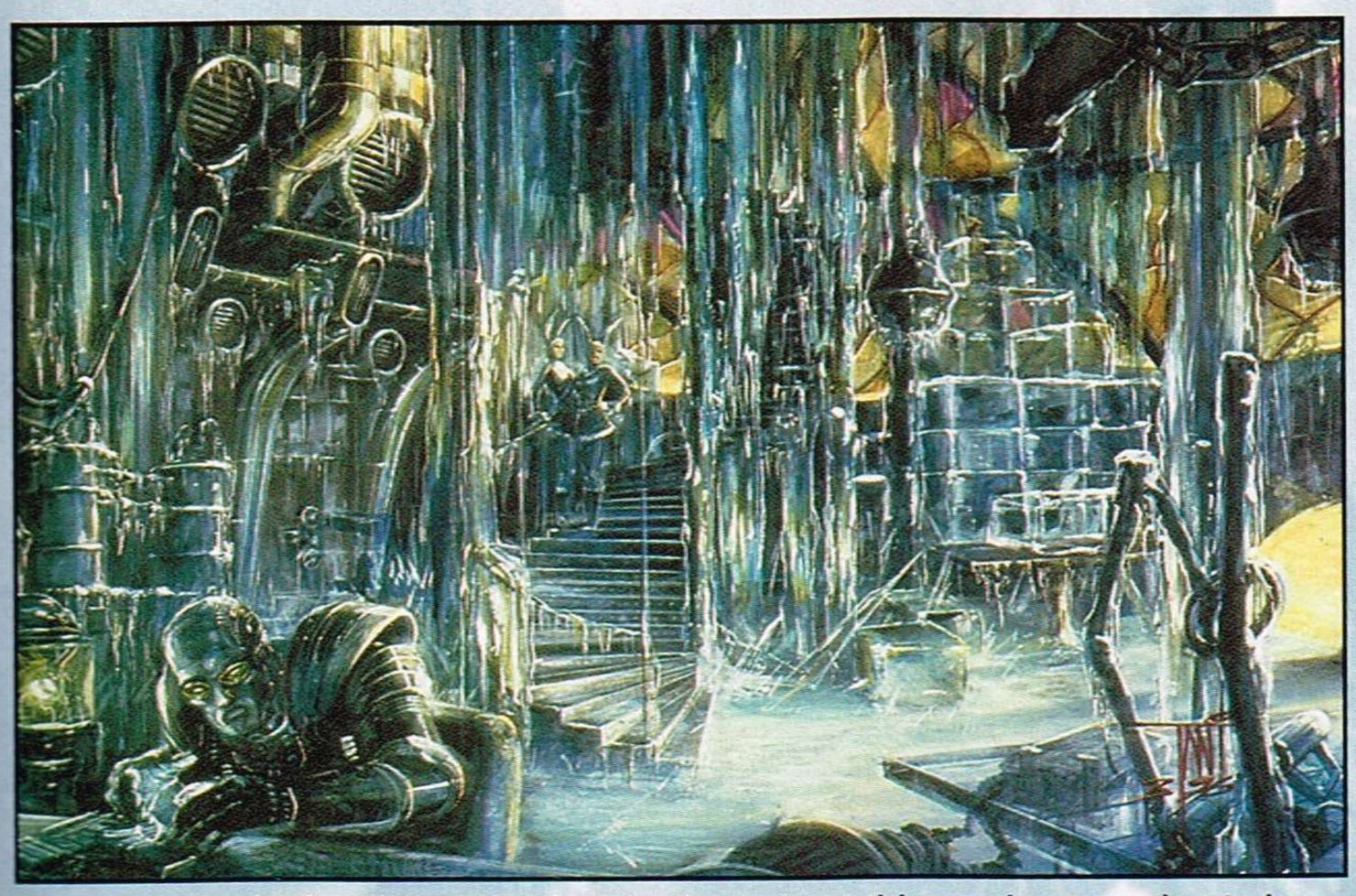
First things first. The nipple controversy that surrounded *Batman Forever* and the costumes for the crimefighting duo is over. Well, almost over.

"Oh, it's still there," chuckles production designer Barbara Ling, who's once again entering the Batcave for *Batman & Robin*. "It's not as big a deal as the last time. Yes, the costumes have nipples, but how much further can we go with that?"

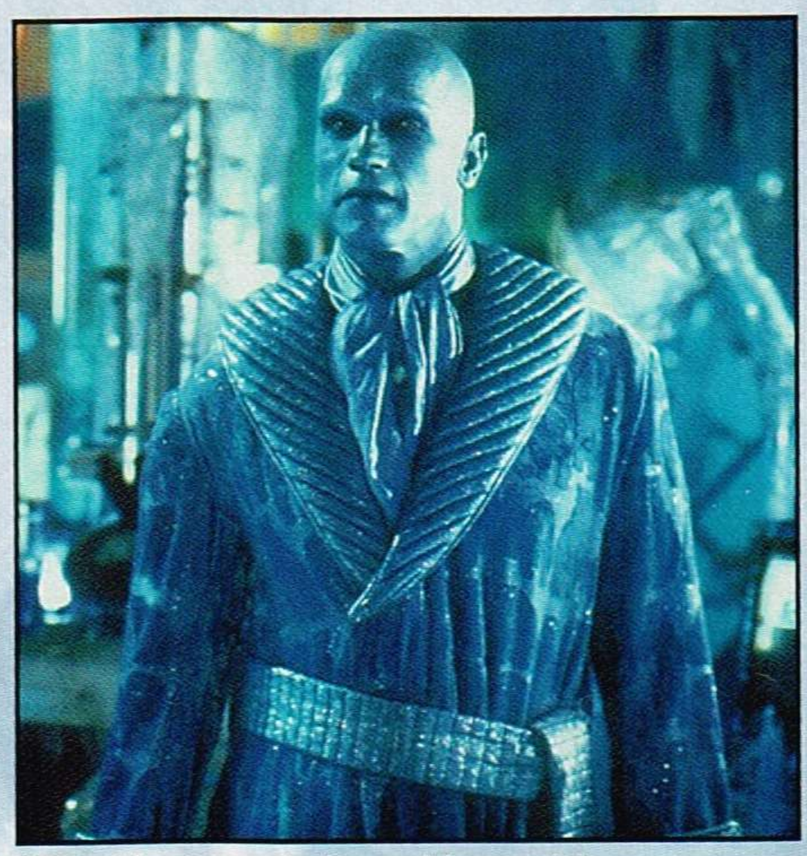
Admittedly, Ling has more to worry about in the aftermath of principal photography on *Batman & Robin*. She's adding up the advantages and disadvantages of guiding the shadowy world of the Dark Knight under director Joel Schumacher's watchful eye for a second time. She has found this trip more of a golden opportunity than a pain in the neck. "This was like a dream. There were no parameters. Whatever we came up with, they used. That kind of freedom on a film like this is nothing less than unbelievable."

Ling, whose production design credits include *The Doors* and Schumacher's own *Falling Down*, finds it hard to contain her enthusiasm as she describes the difference between working on *Batman Forever* and *Batman & Robin*. "On the first *Batman* film I did, I was playing with things that I had never played with before and, by the end, it was, 'Gee! If I could only do this one more time.' And then I did get the chance to do it again."

And with one *Batman* film under her belt, the production designer knew exactly where to begin. "Going into this movie, I knew how things would work within the inherent darkness of the movie. Whenever you see Batman, it's

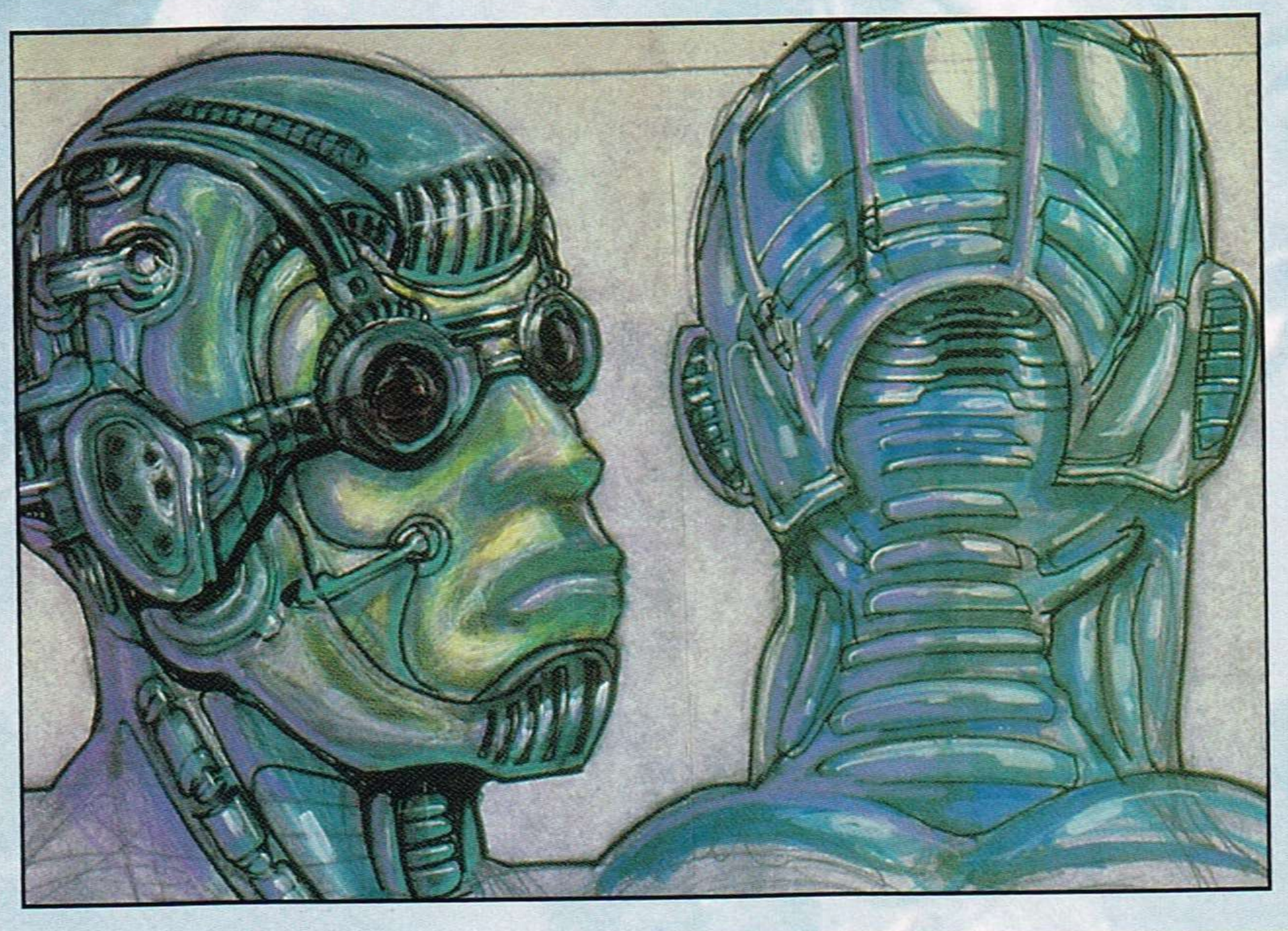


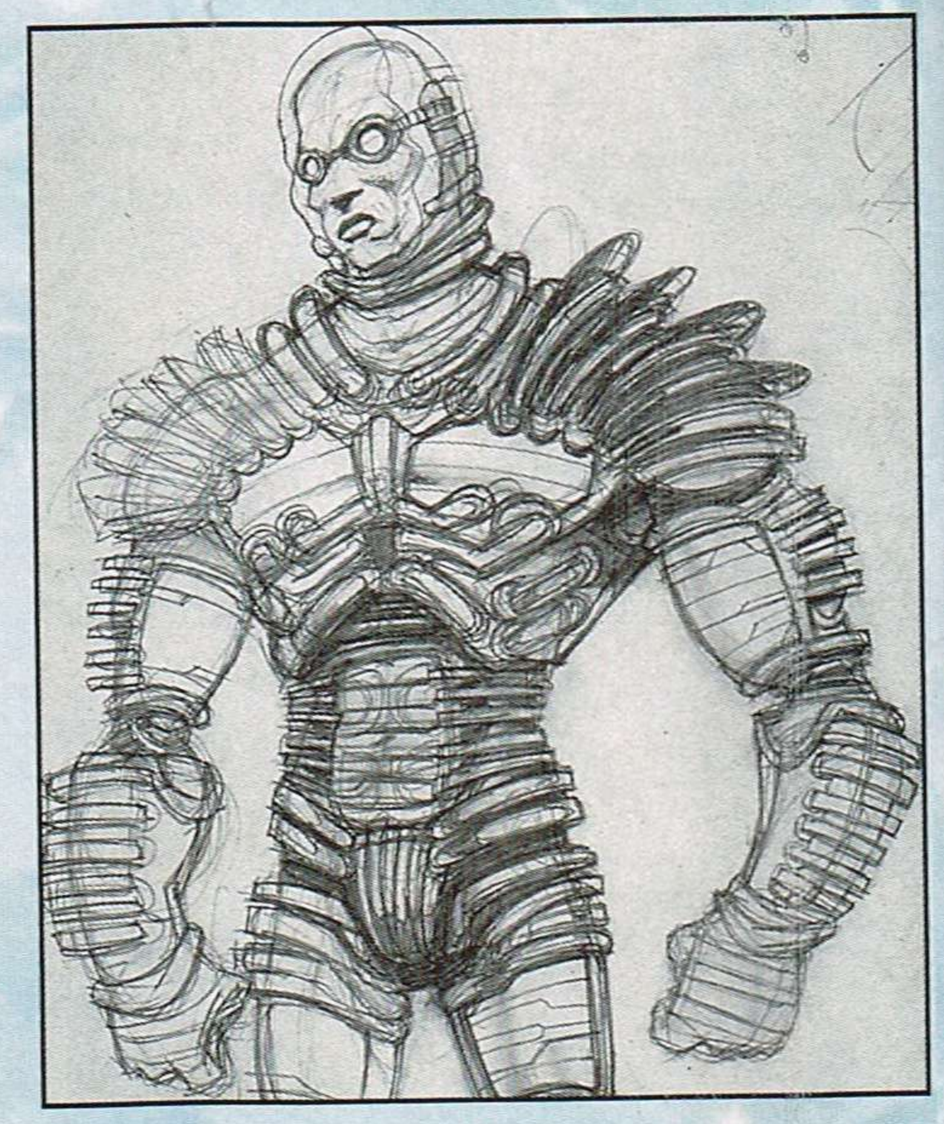
"I knew going in that the major element throughout this movie was going to be ice," says *Batman & Robin* production designer Barbara Ling.



"The idea was to keep his world consistent with the fact that he must live in sub-zero temperatures," Ling notes of designing the digs for Arnold Schwarzenegger's Mr. Freeze.

Photos: Christine Loss





To keep his body temperature low, Victor Fries must rely on a suit made up of complex mechanical devices—including a jet pack.
DIRECTOR APPROVED
DATE 9/16/96

always night. There are never any day scenes, so the look is all-important. In coming back a second time, I've been able to cut through things and get right to creating larger feels and more scope on the screen."

Dark Designs

The storyline of *Batman & Robin*, of course, had a major impact on Ling's approach to designing the film. "I knew going in that the major element throughout this movie was going to be ice. Consequently, how interiors and architecture would look iced and de-iced would dictate much of how this movie would look. After all, the entire story leads up to the fact that Gotham City is going to be frozen. So, we started from the frozen element and then worked our way backwards."

Ice turned out to be the logical beginning for Ling's efforts in making the movie designed to chill. "I didn't want a 'white' look. What I wanted was an ice look that was translucent and lit from the inside. We did massive research and found that it had never been tried before, the reason being that it was very hard to do," Ling explains. "We went through months of testing different materials before we

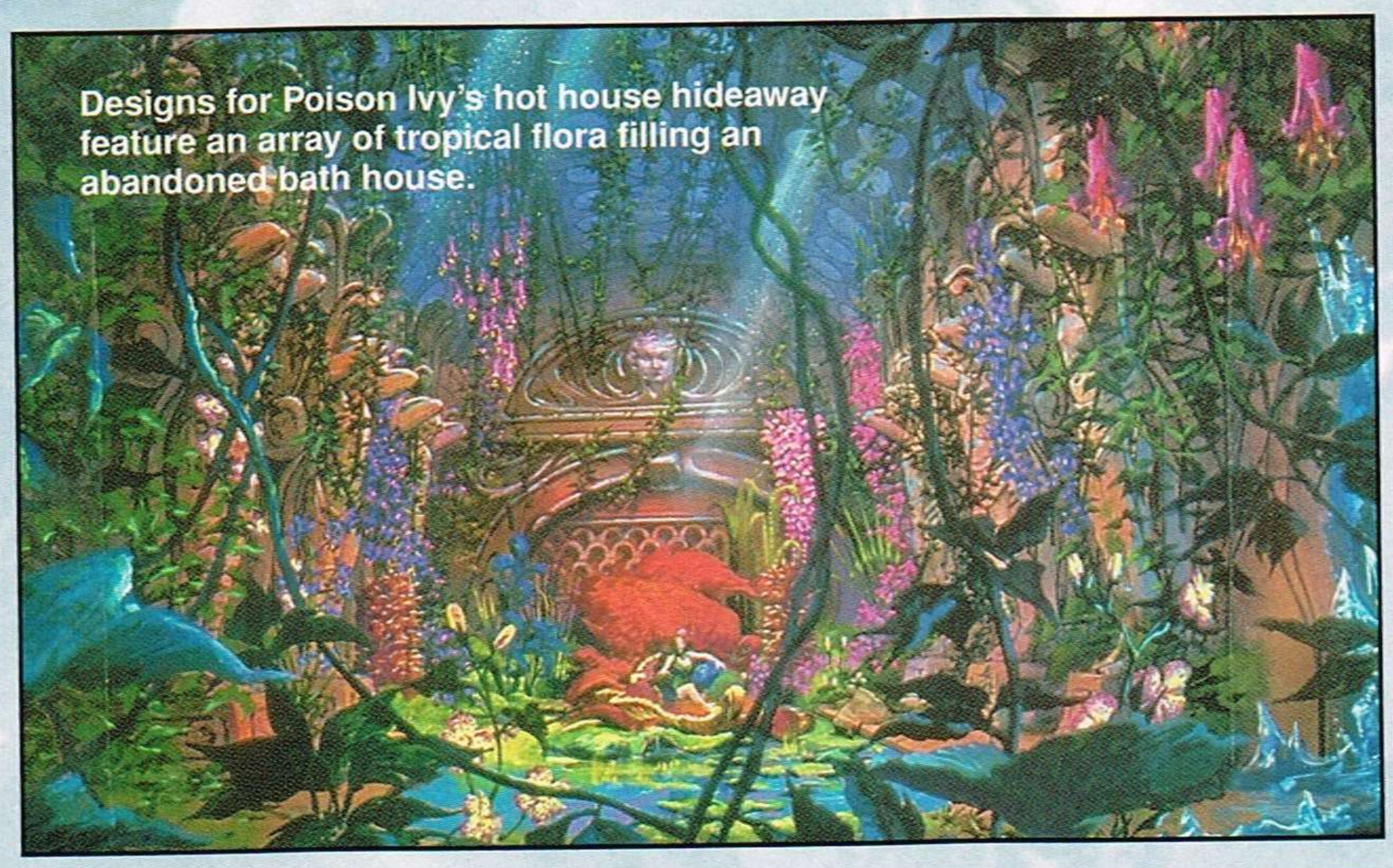
finally came up with the idea of using clear cast resins. The result was ice that was magical, surreal and kind of edgy."

The cold touch continued when it came to designing Mr. Freeze's lair. "The idea was to keep his world consistent with the fact that he must live in sub-zero temperatures. So, we came up with the idea of an ice cream factory, a place that has this blinding kind of refraction. We used mylar materials so that anything a light touches would reflect back. We also added carbon dioxide smoke. Again, everything was on the edge."

In contrast, Poison Ivy's hot house hideaway, an abandoned bath house, contained a South American rain forest influence. "There are huge vines, flowers and trees just about everywhere," offers Ling, "and a fog system that lets fog roll down from above."

Ling has also revamped stately Wayne Manor, offering up a warmer, "more bombastic and larger house" made all the more hip in design by the fact that "Robin is now around." When it came to rebuilding the Batcave, the designer acknowledges that she was basically starting from ground zero.

"The Batcave was totally blown up at the end of the last movie so, out of necessity, it had to be totally new. We came up with a mixture of blue steel and girders that hold the Batcave's inner structure together. The roving rooms and the monitor rooms have essentially become steel vaults, and Robin's influence is enhanced by the fact that Batman and

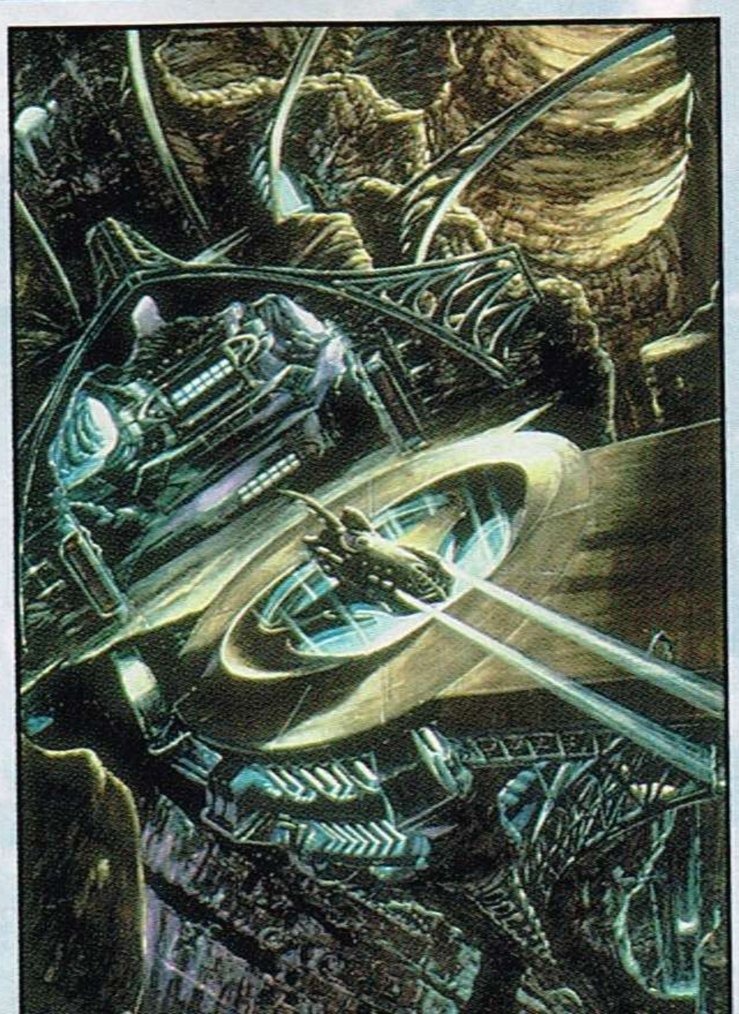


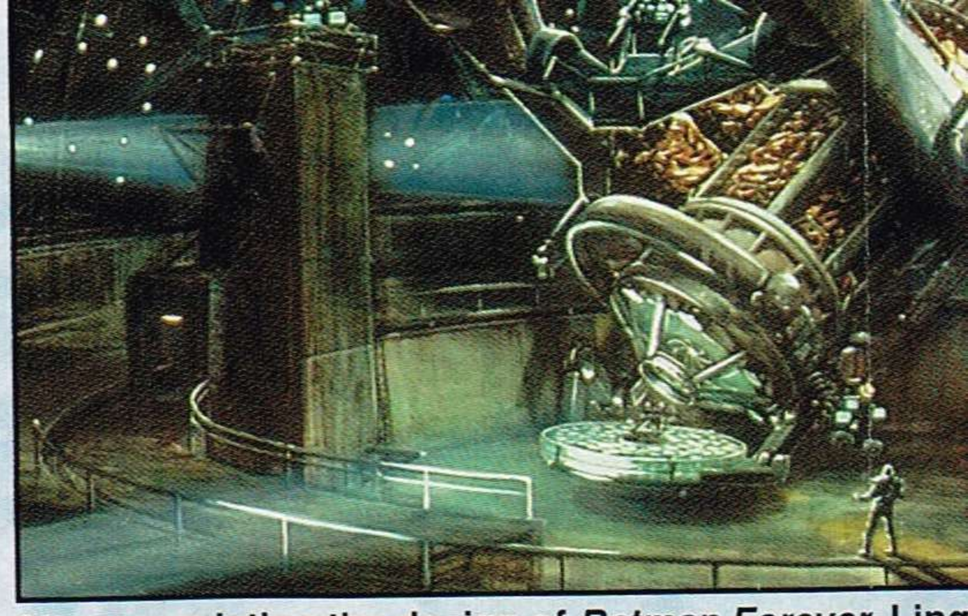
Designs for Poison Ivy's hot house hideaway feature an array of tropical flora filling an abandoned bath house.

Robin now have their own separate secret chambers where their costumes and weapons are stored. The area where the Batmobile and the Redbird rise up from the depths is now five times larger than in the previous film. That's typical of the very big look we were trying for with the set."

Size, or the perceived lack of same, was integral in Ling's approach to the latest model of the Batmobile. "It's funny how the camera sees size," she says. "In *Batman Forever*, I actually felt it came across as being too small. This time, I decided to design it as a convertible to enhance its size. It has a much longer wheel base and is low slung, with the fenders wrapping around in a cape-like sensibility. It has light panels which move in rotation and a series of flames which shoot out the side. We've also engraved the Bat-symbol on the wheels. The color scheme is primarily chrome and black."

The Bat-arsenal has also undergone a change, largely determined by the nature of the villains Batman and Robin are fighting. "There are a bunch of ice-fighting tools and weed whackers to battle Mr. Freeze and Poison Ivy. There are all sorts of Bat- and Robin-arangs and laser





After completing the design of *Batman Forever*, Ling to take another crack at visualizing the Dark Knight's

cutters in Batman and Robin shapes. All of the existing weapons have been updated. There's more of a steel look to them and, in Batman's case, we've redesigned the weapons so that they're attached to him. He'll reach to his utility belt once or twice but, now, things fly out of his hands and out of his costume."

Bat Creations

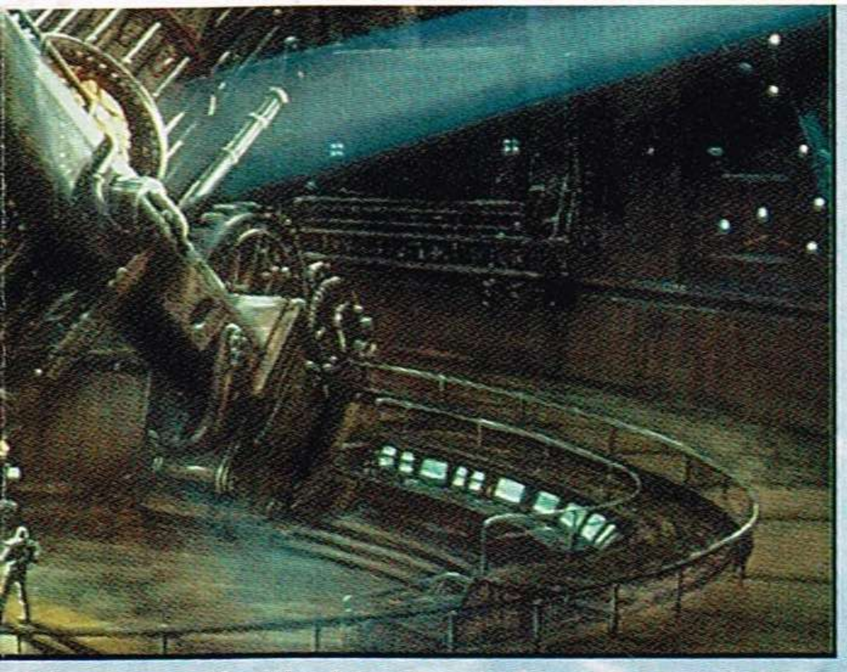
Gotham City has also undergone a change in the sense that "it's now seen in a broader scope and a larger world. When it comes to Gotham City, the challenge for me has always been to show more of Gotham each time out. This time we're showing a lot more exteriors. I've always looked at Gotham City with a kind of World's Fair point-of-view. It's an astoundingly large city. The big thing this time out was adding color which, in turn, gives the city a lighter look."

Ling also had a hand in creating the costumes. "Mr. Freeze was easily the most difficult costume to design. The idea, from the beginning, was to go with a metallic suit with hand-pounded aluminum armor and molds. That costume was like building a car on top of somebody. We knew lighting Freeze's costume would be difficult so we made a point of adding a metalizing look to the costume so lighting would not have to be so severe.

"Poison Ivy's suit, by comparison, was easier but not completely so. She couldn't just be completely sexy. We had to come up with something that was not only alluring but heavily character-driven. Her background and her life had to be reflected in the costume. We pushed Bane's costume quite a bit. In the comics, Bane wears a wrestling outfit. For the movie, we gave him this surreal rubber mask with tubes snaking out across his head.

"Creating Batgirl's costume was not difficult in the sense that it was essentially going to be a takeoff on Batman," Ling continues. "It just had to be sexy. The Batman and Robin costumes are sleeker and show more in the way of the actor's anatomy. And when the battles begin, they both have more armor-looking costumes that they change into."

Thanks to the Riddler's destructive spree in *Batman Forever*, the Batcave needed a total revamp for *Batman & Robin*.



r, Ling was thrilled to have the opportunity ight's world.

Ling steps away from her current chores and looks back at *Batman Forever*. "It's tough when you come into a film that has already been done twice," she recalls, alluding to the late Anton Furst's production designs for *Batman* and Bo Welch's work on *Batman Returns*. "There were the worries of how far we could take the changes and whether or not people would accept them. The biggest challenge was the Riddler's world. We had to create this background from scratch. About halfway through, I began to wish we could have seen more exteriors in the movie. I came in at an interesting time for the franchise. It was going through a change from the first two films' very dark qualities to a much more lighter tone. But, even at that point, I didn't feel like I was restricted in what I could do."

And that, to a large extent, is because Ling is on the scene first. "The first thing I do on a Batman movie is design the villains. I find out who they are, where they live and how their actions will affect Gotham City and, by association, Batman and Robin. My work is largely done before the film is cast. Then, it's just a matter of fine-tuning things to fit the actor. The casting process is when I really have fun. I get to watch the actors try on the costumes, step onto the sets and begin to completely feed into their roles and find their place in the universe I've designed."

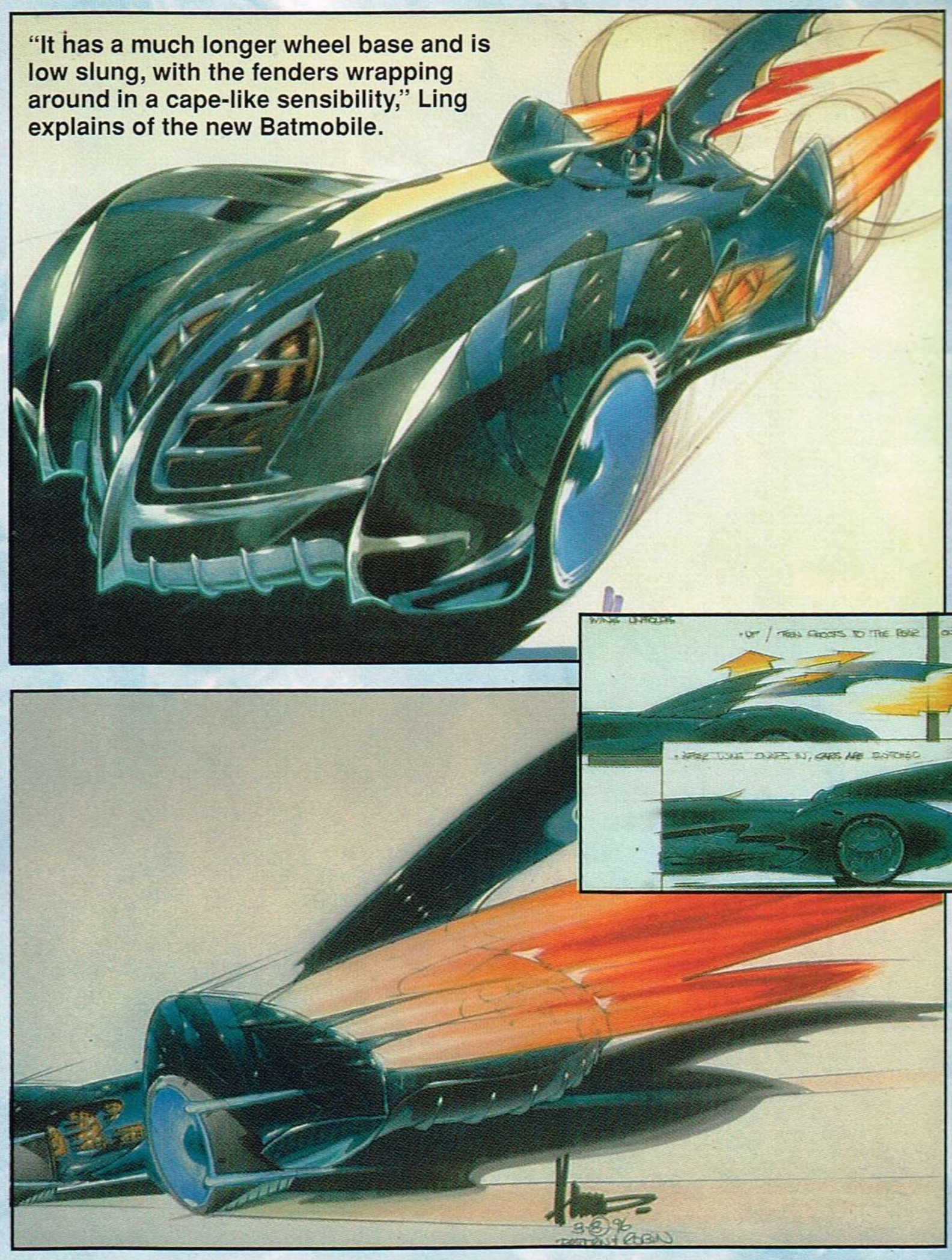
Ling laughingly denies that her Batman design work owes anything to the campy '60s TV series. "Definitely not! They did some interesting work on a very small scale but there's nothing of that show in what I've done. At least I hope not."

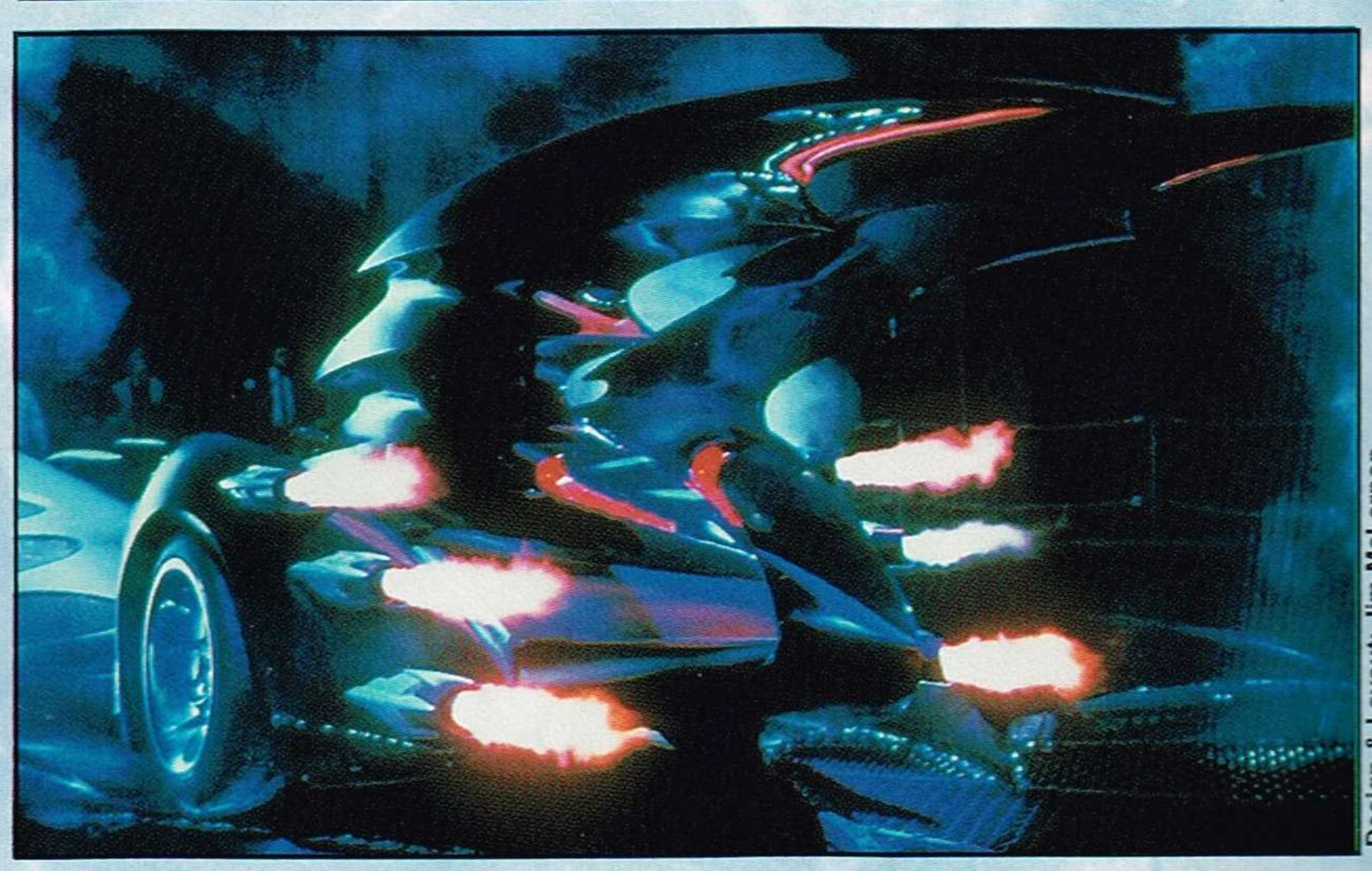
But she does concede that the long history of Batman comics has guided her hand. "*The Dark Knight Returns*, in particular, produced an amazing group of stunning colored frames and I feel that each picture I've worked on has taken the films closer to what I've liked about the comics. I loved the first two films; that stunning black and white look is truly amazing. But the thing that keeps Batman alive is that it constantly changes. If we stuck with the same tone all the time, it would become boring. I feel, from a design perspective, that it's important to have up and down tones. It would be great at some point to take Batman out of Gotham City and have a whole different set of attitudes. For Batman to continue to work in the movies, it will be necessary to go into darker values and stranger places."

After her Batman duties are over, Ling will take her typical three-to-four months off before considering her next project—which may mean a return for another Batman film.

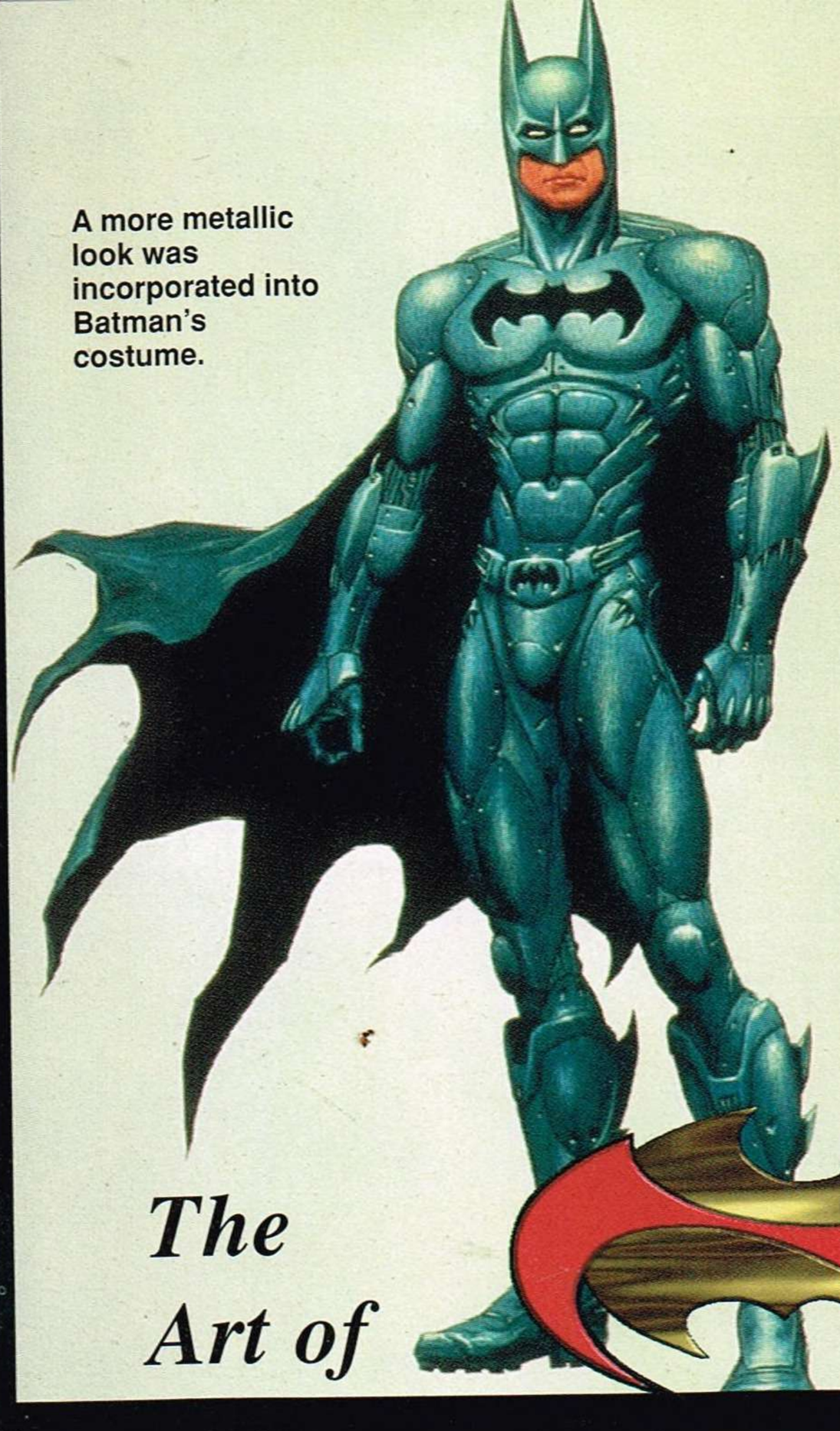
"From a design point-of-view, I would be crazy not to. Batman is not like a modern day film or even a science fiction or action movie. Working on a Batman film is working in a whole different world where there are no limits. Sure, you work like a dog and kill yourself for a year-and-a-half, but it's worth it."

"It has a much longer wheel base and is low slung, with the fenders wrapping around in a cape-like sensibility," Ling explains of the new Batmobile.





Design & Layout: Jim McLernon



A more metallic look was incorporated into Batman's costume.

Look ma! Still no tights!

TEVES

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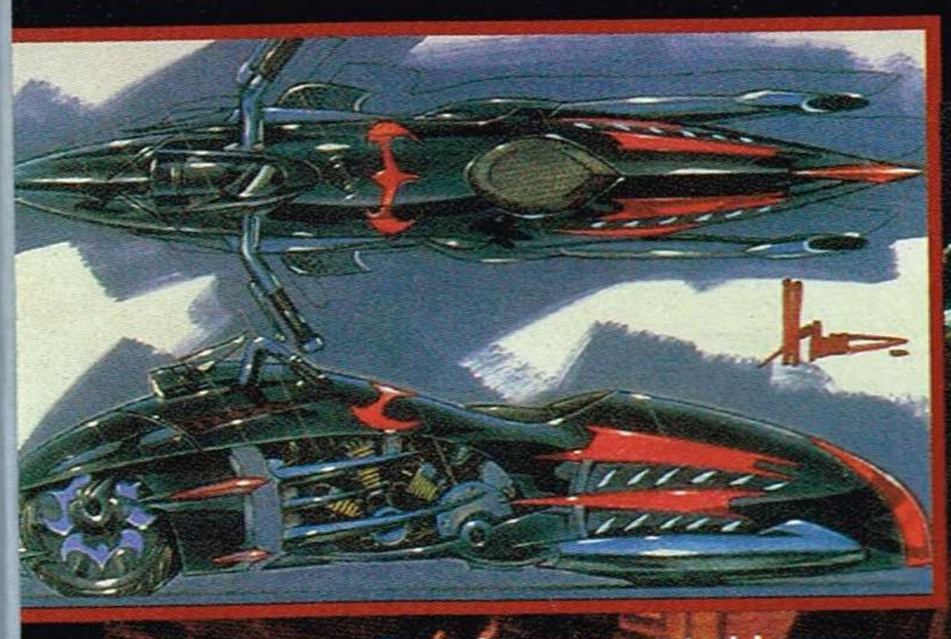
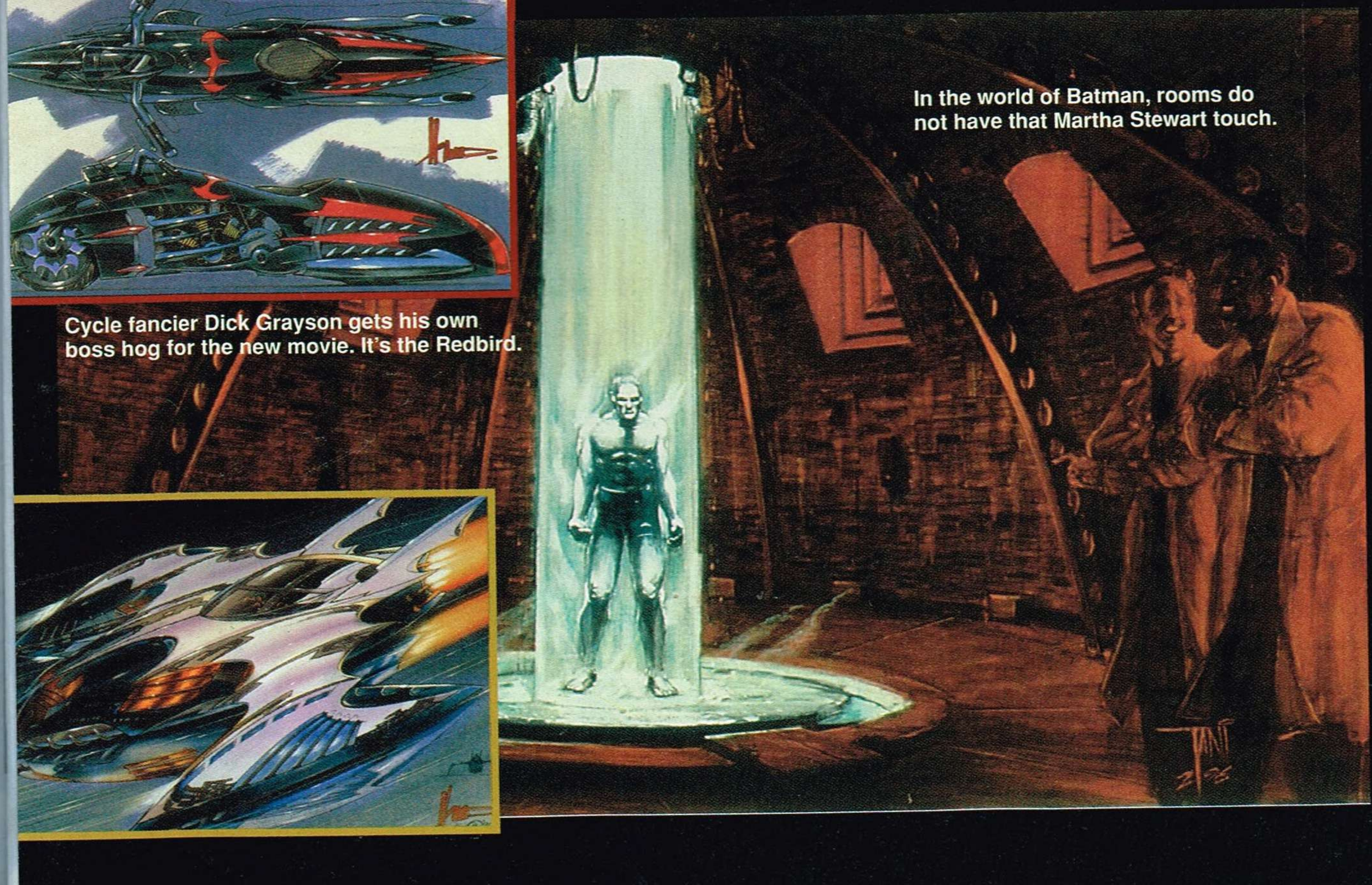
The Art of

BATMAN & ROBIN

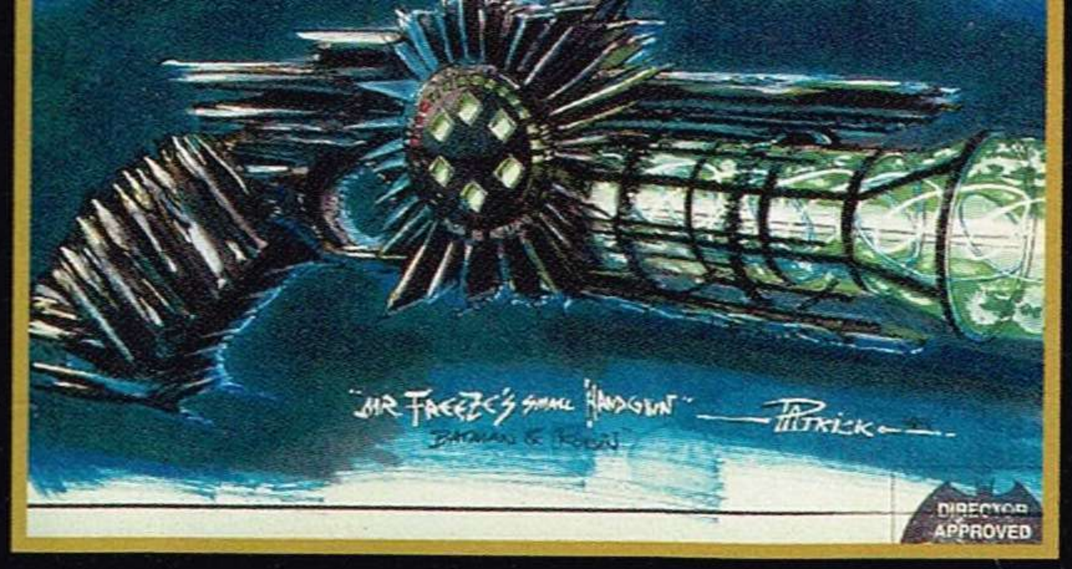


Cycle fancier Dick Grayson gets his own boss hog for the new movie. It's the Redbird.

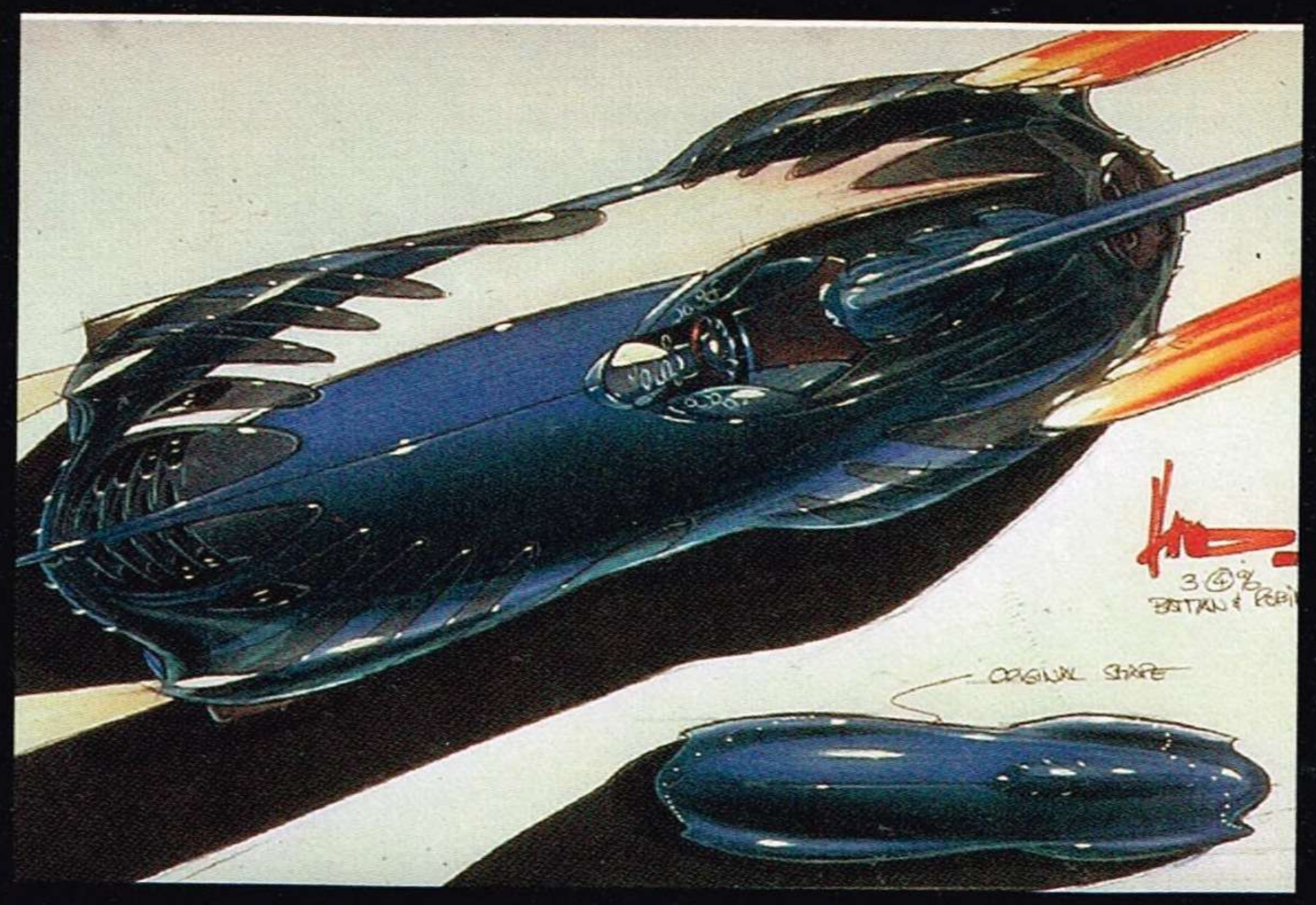


In the world of Batman, rooms do not have that Martha Stewart touch.

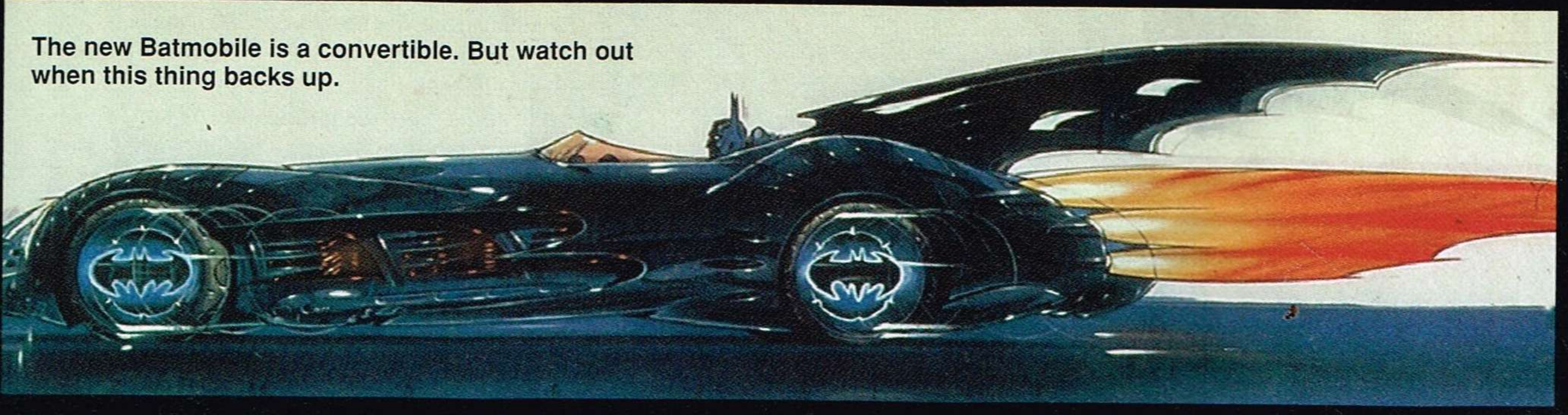
Photos: Robert Isenberg

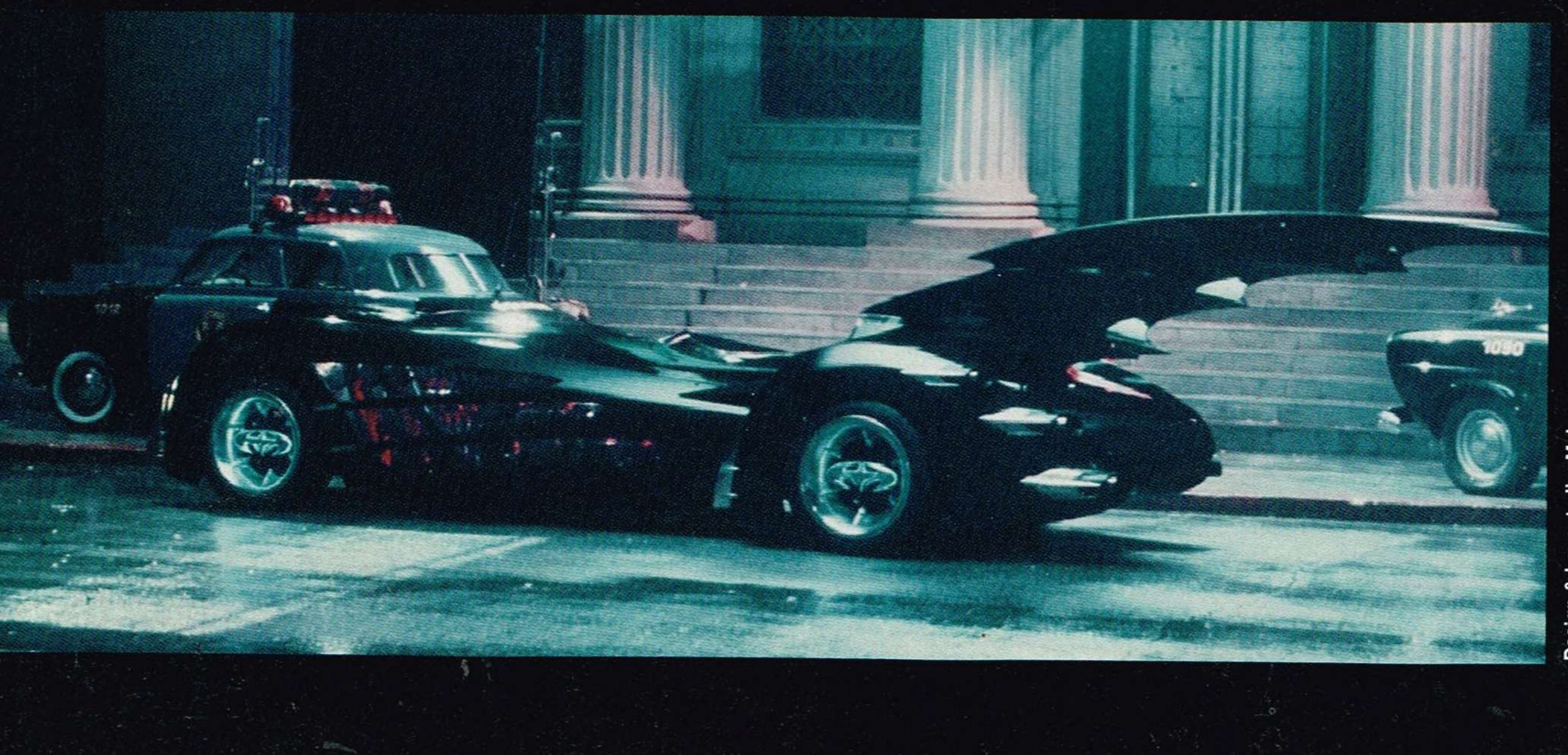


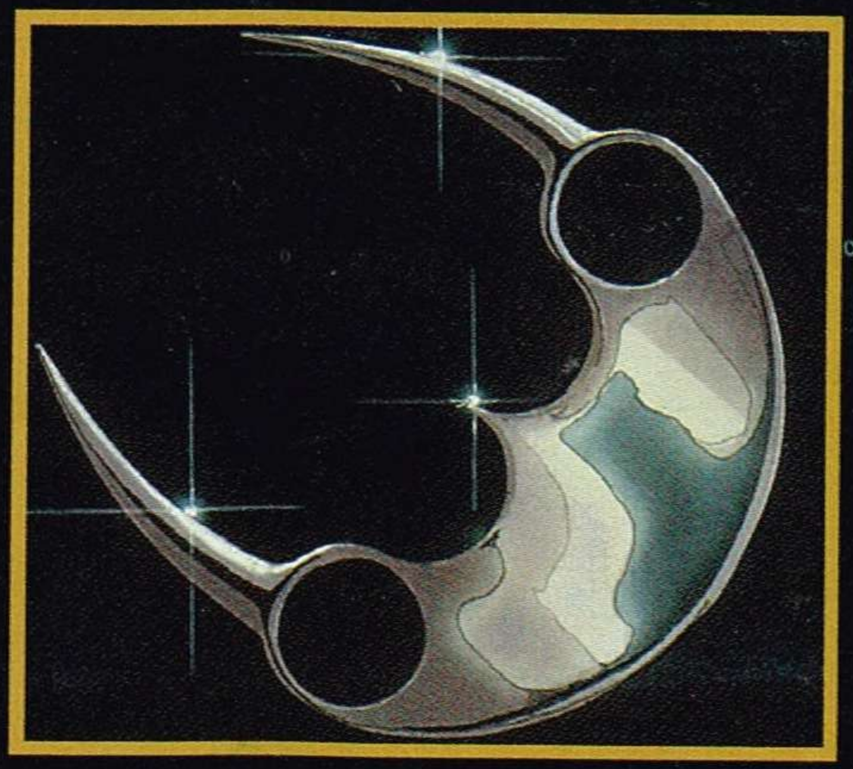
Wouldn't Otto Preminger have killed for one of these back in the '60s?



The new Batmobile is a convertible. But watch out when this thing backs up.







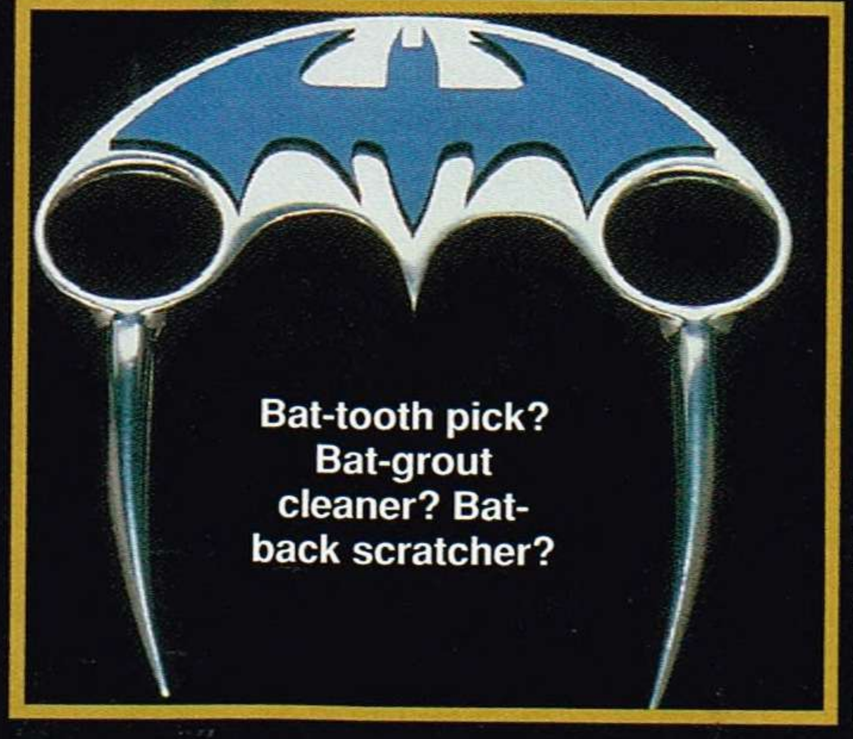
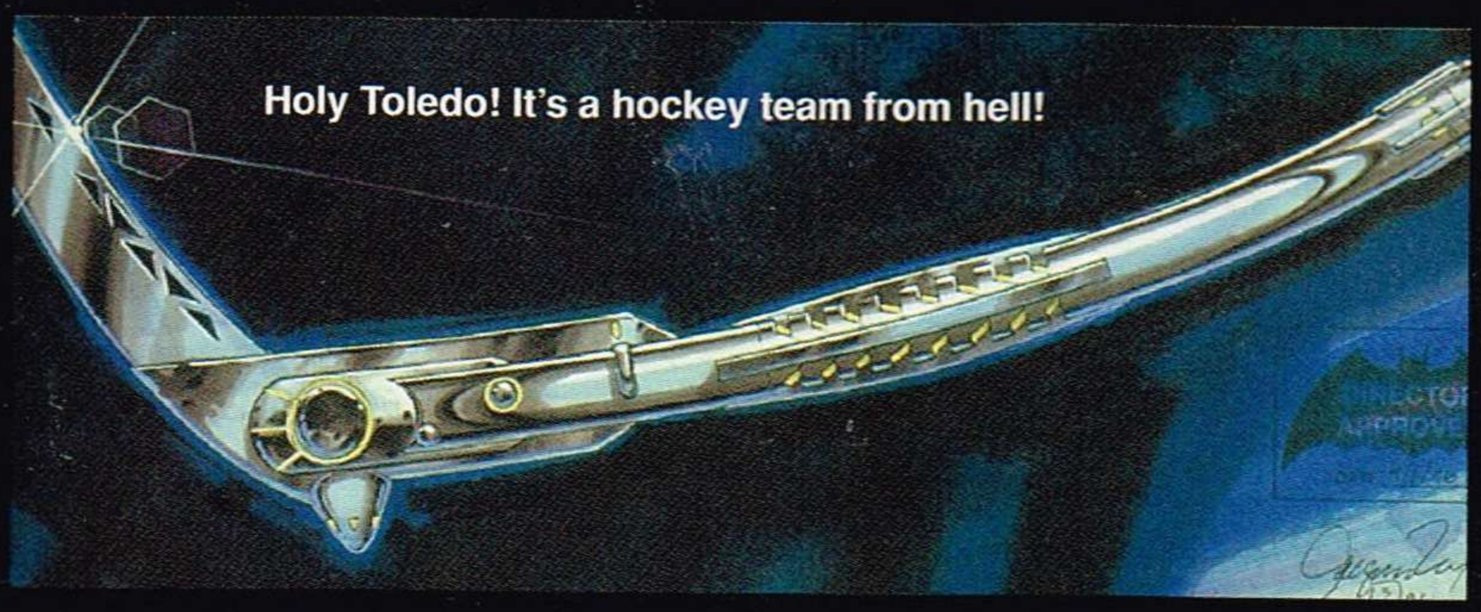
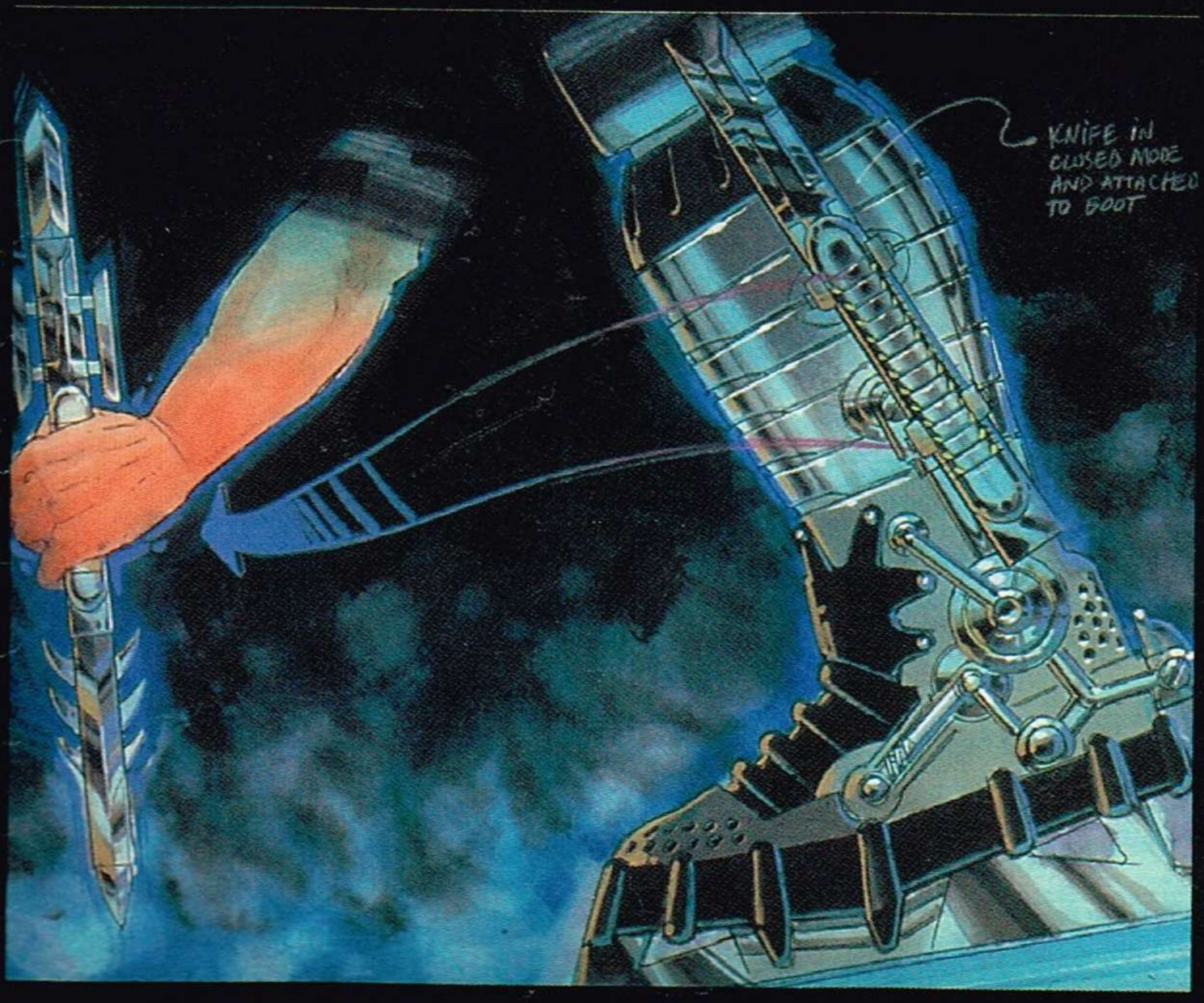


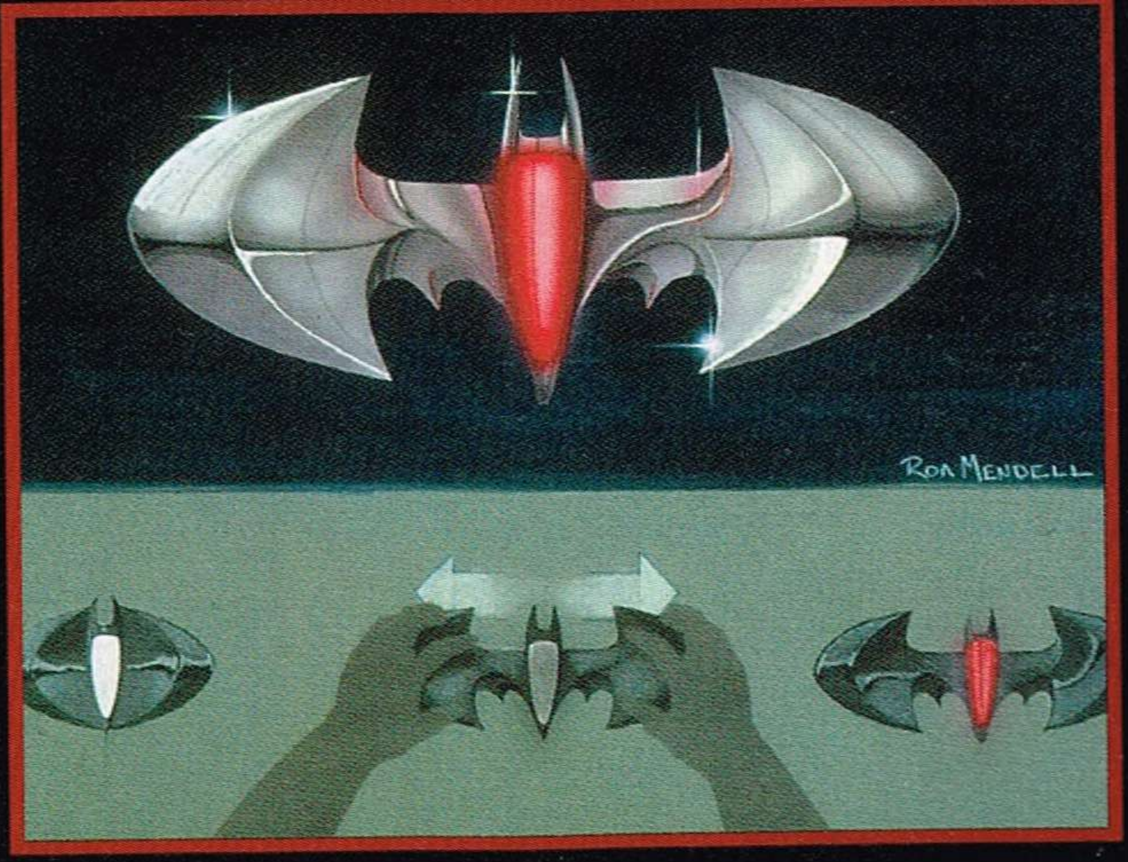
Photo: Christine Loss

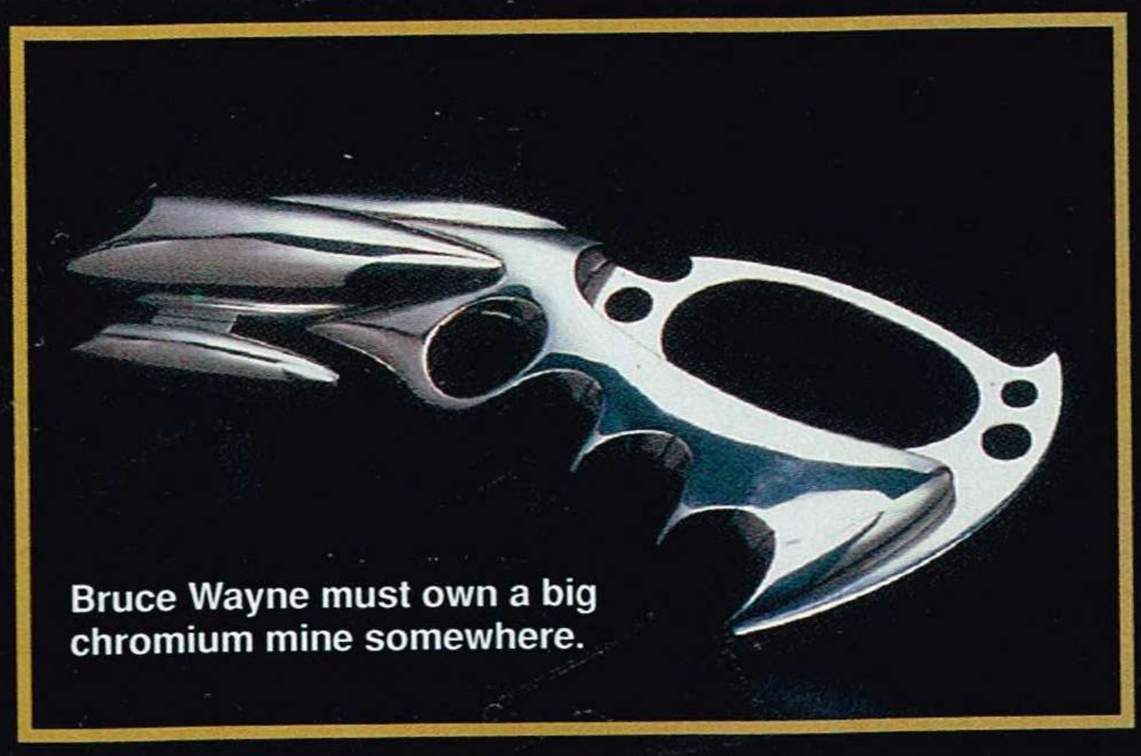
Photo: Christine Loss





Selected Batarang Weaponry & Art: Ron Mendell





Bruce Wayne must own a big chromium mine somewhere.

Photo: Christine Loss

The Batarang—a beloved classic!

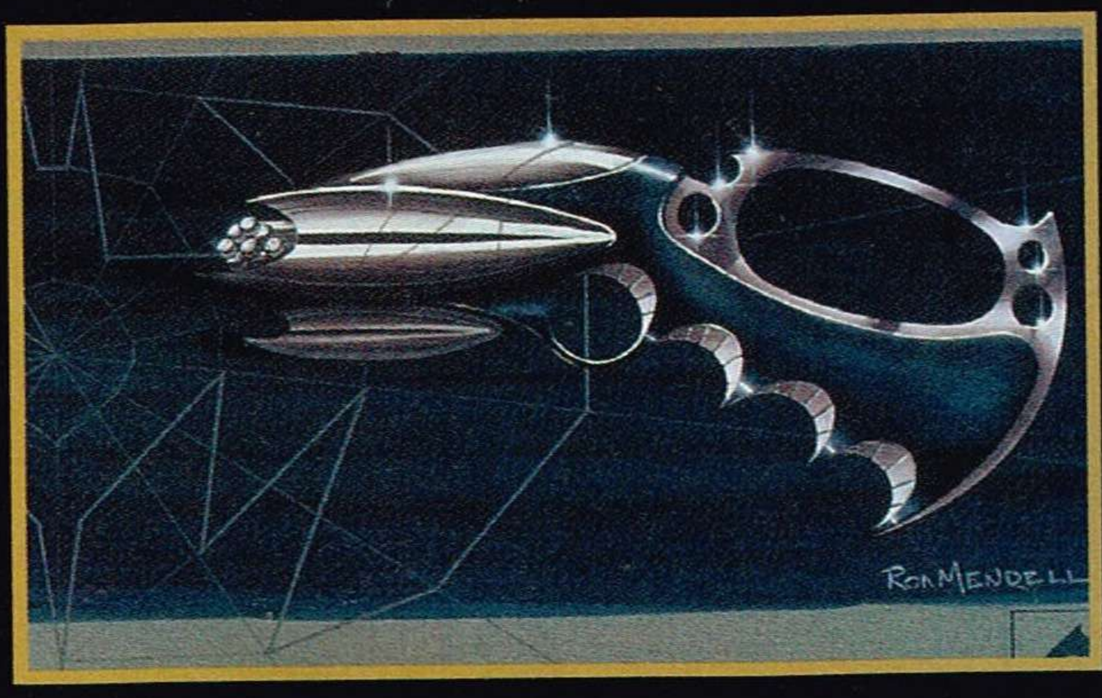
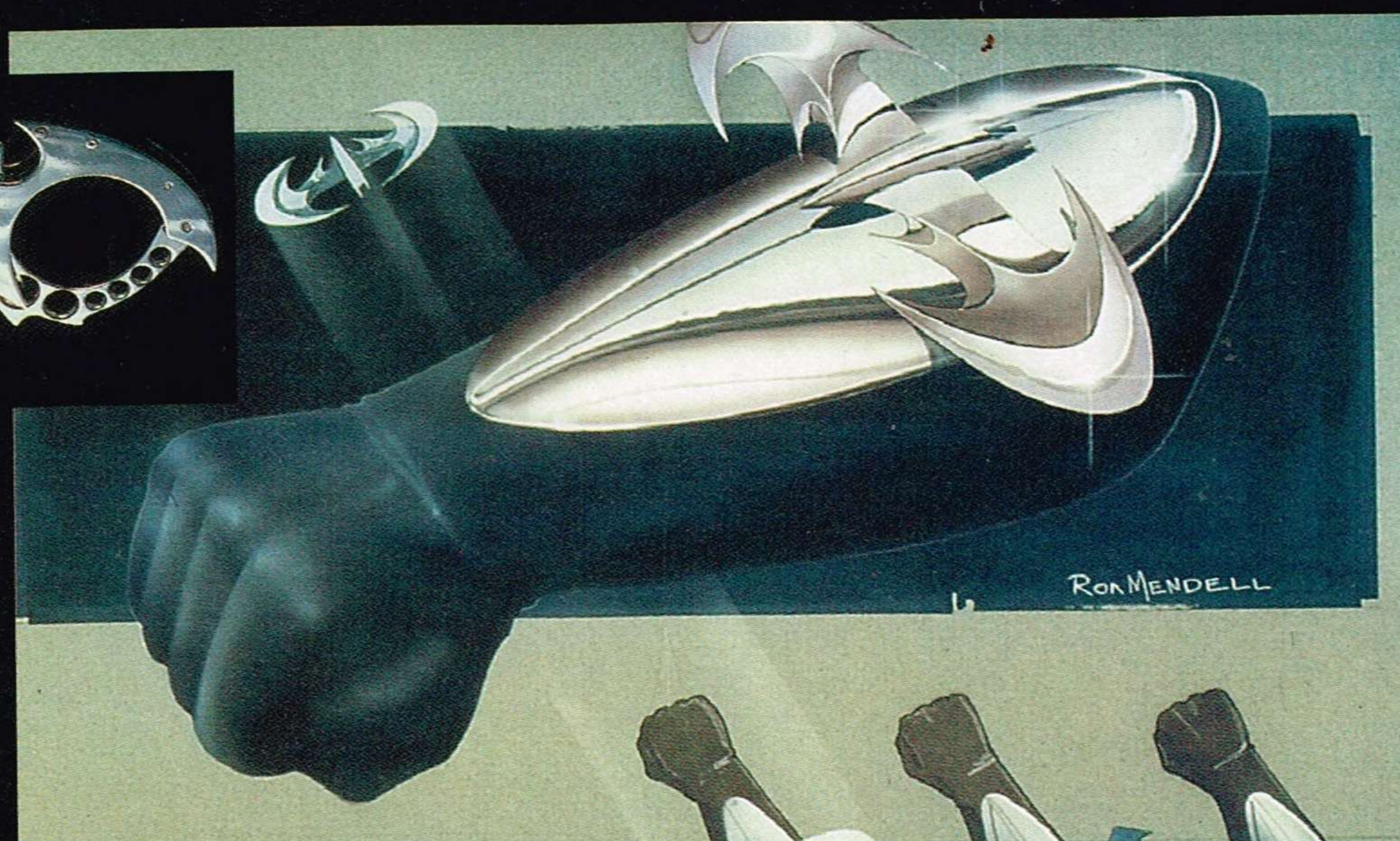


Photo: Christine Loss

Time for a little Bat-gardening?

Photo: Christine Loss

Yeah, like any of the criminals actually get captured and handcuffed in these films.



Batman has a few new tricks up his sleeve.

WITH

CAPE & COWL

Joel Schumacher is thrilled about life with *Batman & Robin.* ☞

By MARC SHAPIRO

There are those days in every director's life when, no matter how well he has prepared, he feels like he's in over his head. Joel Schumacher was mega-prepared when *Batman & Robin* began production, but it didn't prevent him from having those days. "On my toughest days, I felt like I had jumped off the high dive and, half-way down, realized there was very little water in the pool," laughs Schumacher at the expense of *Batman & Robin*, his follow-up to *Batman Forever*. "But to my way of thinking, this film was never so unwieldy that I was in danger of losing control."

Schumacher, during an early evening conversation, is having some control problems. Driving through Los Angeles with cellular phone in hand, the director of such genre favorites as *The Lost Boys* and *Flatliners* and such critical gems as *Falling Down* and *A Time to Kill* is occasionally hitting telephone-unfriendly spots in the road which cause the connection to quit mid-question. He's quick to buzz back, apologetic over the interruption, and goes on to show STARLOG why he is one of the most consistently accommodating members of the science fiction universe.

"I've always felt that talking to the press to promote a film was part of the job," he offers through occasional stabs of low-pitched static. "I could say, 'No,' when asked to do interviews, but how does that serve the film? I think it's bad manners not to grant somebody a little bit of time. I think it would be *rude* not to make myself available to promote *Batman & Robin*."

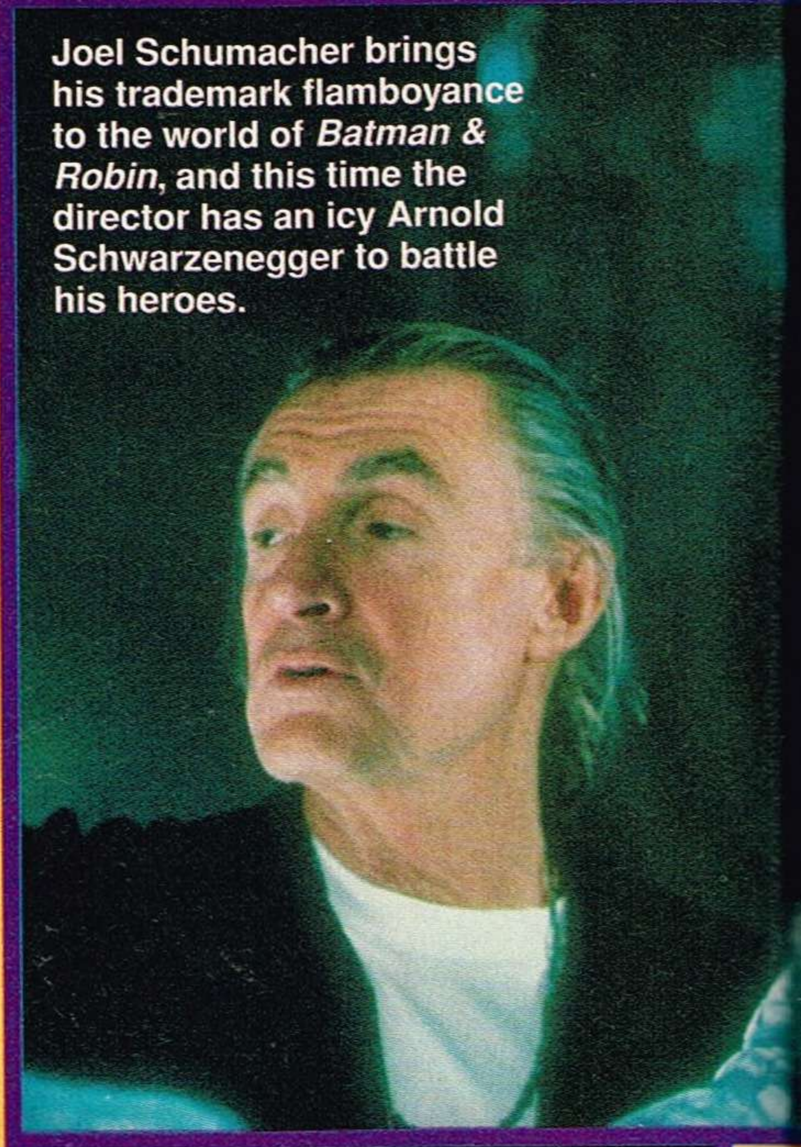
Beneath the Mask

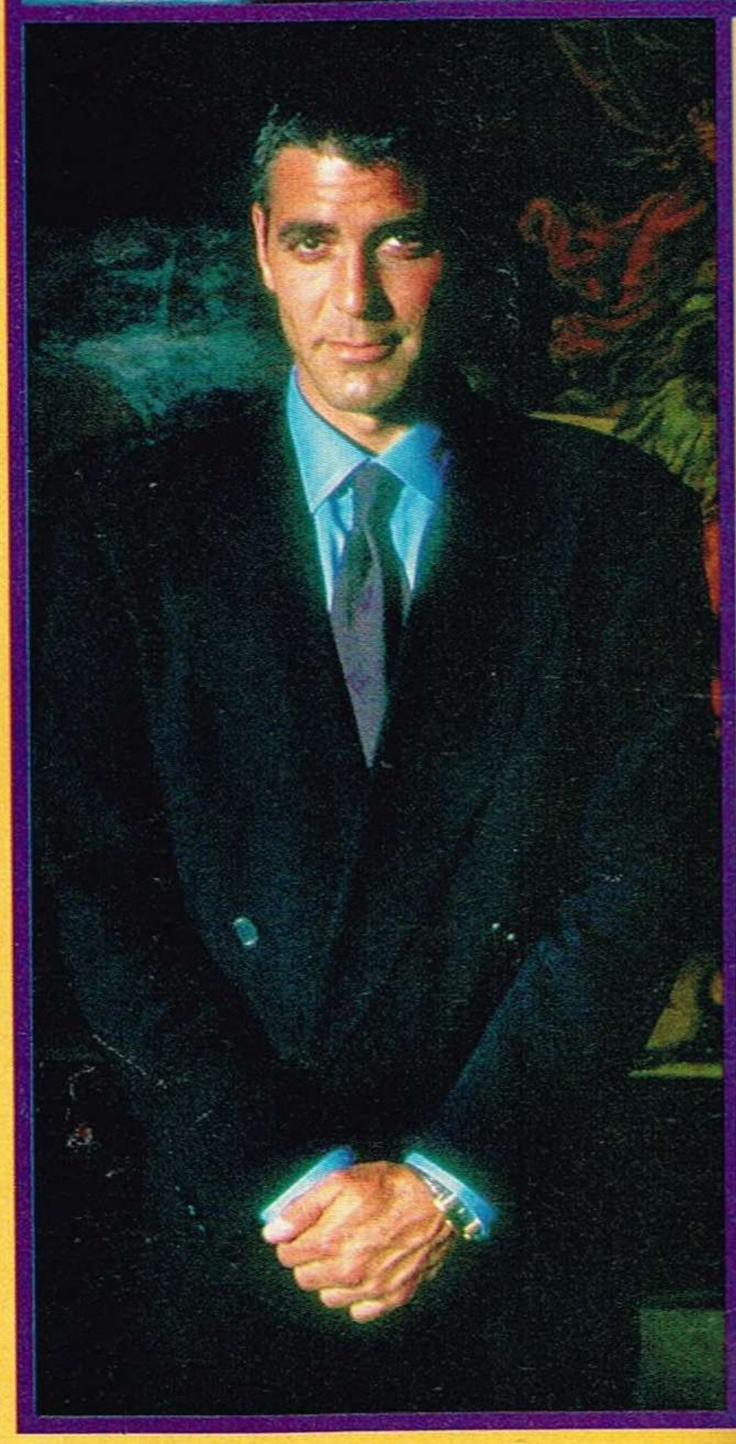
But the director warns that there's nothing in the way of the sizzle that marked Val Kilmer's stint in *Batman Forever* to set tabloid tongues wagging. "There has been no scandal on this film at all. Some magazine said I had been feuding with Uma Thurman, and that was news to both of us. In fact, things have been so quiet that most of the gossip has been what the next film is going to be about. And I can assure you of one thing: Howard Stern is *not* going to play the Scarecrow."

Schumacher was in Mississippi and already hard at work on *A Time to Kill* when *Batman Forever* opened huge in June 1995. By August, Warner Bros. executives were on the horn long distance "asking me if I would do another *Batman*."

The director had "big fun" on *Batman Forever* but knew that "the pressure would be there" on a second tour of Bat-duty. There was also, in the back of his mind, "the fear of failing...and especially of failing the audience." But the major obstacle to Schumacher giving an immediate "I'll do it" had nothing to do with any of those concerns. "My only trepidation was that I was not anxious to work with Val Kilmer again," says the director. "Kilmer had an ironclad contract to do *Batman & Robin*. He didn't have a choice. If the studio didn't let him out of his contract, he would have had to do it, and I was feeling honor-bound to do the next *Batman* film even if it was with Kilmer. The reason I felt that way was that I had asked the studio to replace Michael Keaton with Val—I had asked Val to play Batman. If things had turned out differently [and Kilmer stayed in the role], I would not have abandoned him because I felt it would show a lack of integrity, honor and ethics on my part. And besides, I felt that someone had to be the adult in the situation."

Joel Schumacher brings his trademark flamboyance to the world of *Batman & Robin*, and this time the director has an icy Arnold Schwarzenegger to battle his heroes.





"George Clooney has turned out to be perfect as a handsome, billionaire, bachelor playboy," raves Schumacher.

Schumacher does balk at the much-publicized tale that he was thrilled when Kilmer jumped ship to topline *The Saint*. "That's an illusion that has been created. Personally, I think we should try and keep everyone's dignity in place. Let's just say that it was a mutual decision on many people's parts that made everyone happy."

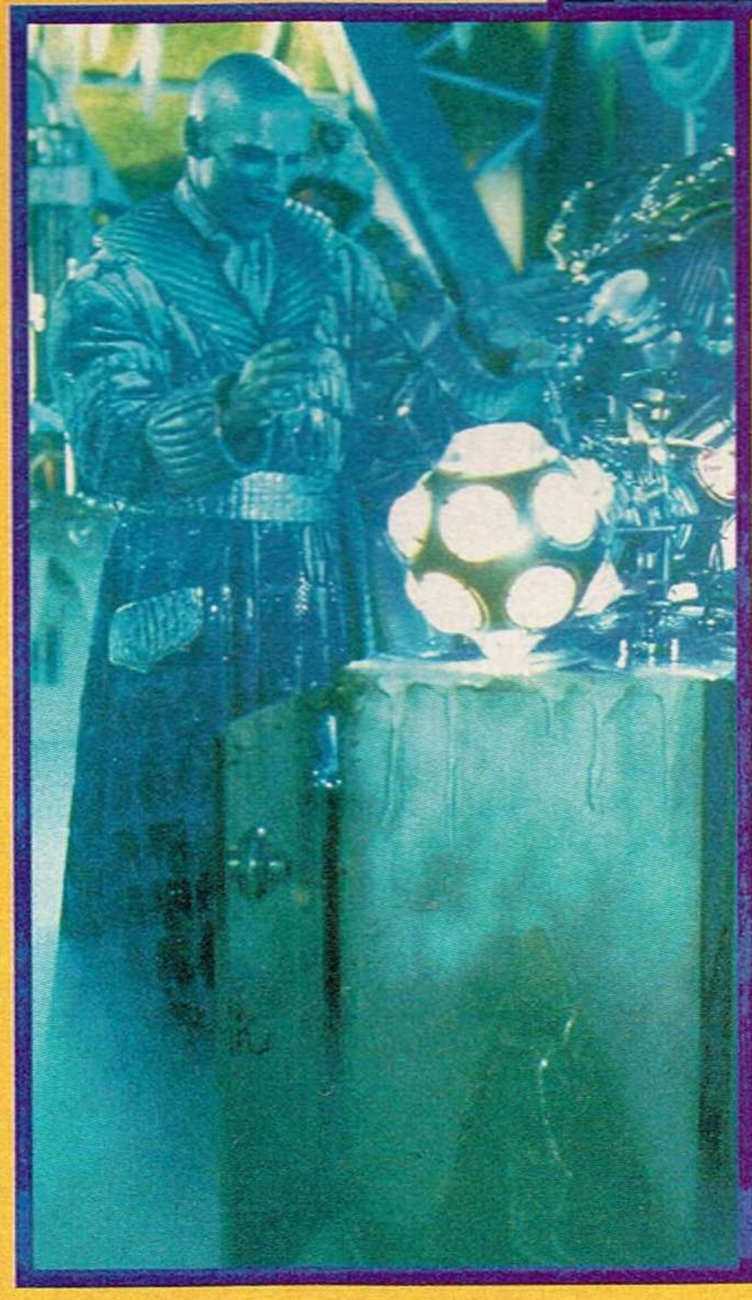
The director is obviously anxious to put the whole Kilmer line of questioning behind him, but he does offer one final assessment of Kilmer. "A lot of fuss has been made about Val's behavior on the set, but while we

"My only trepidation was that I was not anxious to work with Val Kilmer again," says Schumacher, who was thrilled to get George Clooney into the bat suit.

Selected Photos: Christine Loss

"We decided to start with the family scenes," Schumacher notes. Alfred's (Michael Gough) niece arrives for a visit and stays to fight crime.

It's a dangerous world out there, so Batman needs help. Besides Chris O'Donnell's Robin, he has newcomer Batgirl, played by Alicia Silverstone.



In a Batman movie these days, the villain is only as good as his set design.

were making the film, he was actually pretty well-behaved. I think the film's success went to his head. The truth is that Val is a very troubled man who needs help. He's more to be pitied than criticized."

Schumacher concedes that, in hindsight, he owes Kilmer a debt of gratitude. "He said yes to Batman when I needed him and he made it easy for me to put George Clooney in his place." The director decided that Clooney would be the heir to the cowl in February 1996 after seeing him in the vampire-fest *From Dusk Till Dawn*. "As soon as I saw that film, I knew that George was a movie star. I immediately went home and drew a cowl on George's picture, and it looked great. Michael Keaton was an excellent Batman and Val Kilmer was an excellent Batman, but I knew that George would be the best of all."

Beyond the Cape

Aided and abetted by screenwriter Akiva Goldsman, Schumacher had already set about crafting the *Batman & Robin* script, one that the director envisioned taking the franchise in a whole different direction.

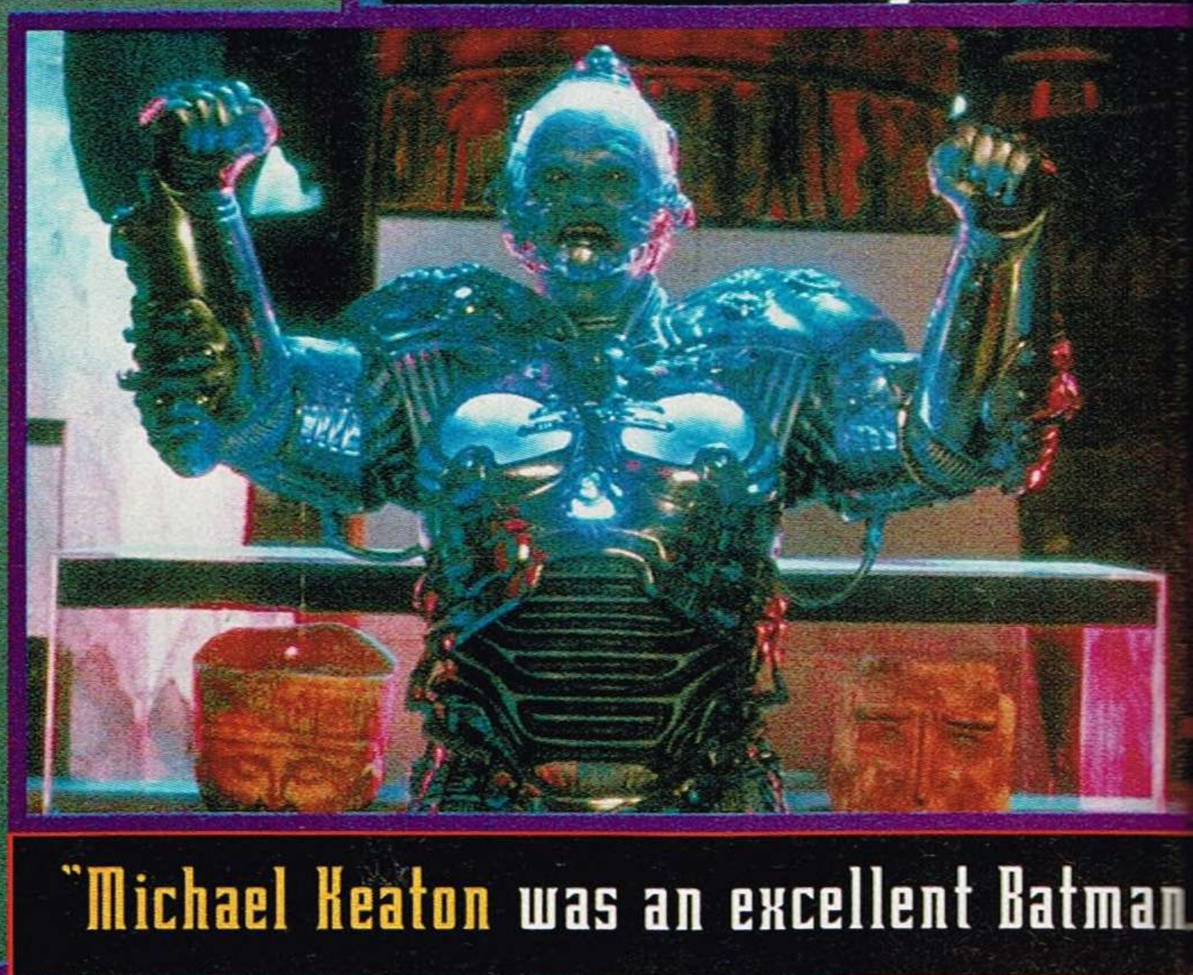
"I felt we needed to move away from the brooding, self-centered, narcissistic Batman from the previous films. Batman is now a 35-year-old man who has taken on a younger partner and there's a serious drama going on with Alfred. Consequently, I felt it was time for Bruce Wayne to stop brooding about the death of his parents and to start taking care of others. I felt it was time to move Batman into the '90s and to be much more of an enlightened source."

As in previous Batfilms, Schumacher offers that the villains—in this case, Mr. Freeze and Poison Ivy—are the linchpins of the plot in the sense that their respective strengths and weaknesses determine Batman's approach to stopping them. The director says that the presence of Mr. Freeze offers a springboard to action. Poison Ivy, on the other hand, is the classic femme fatale.

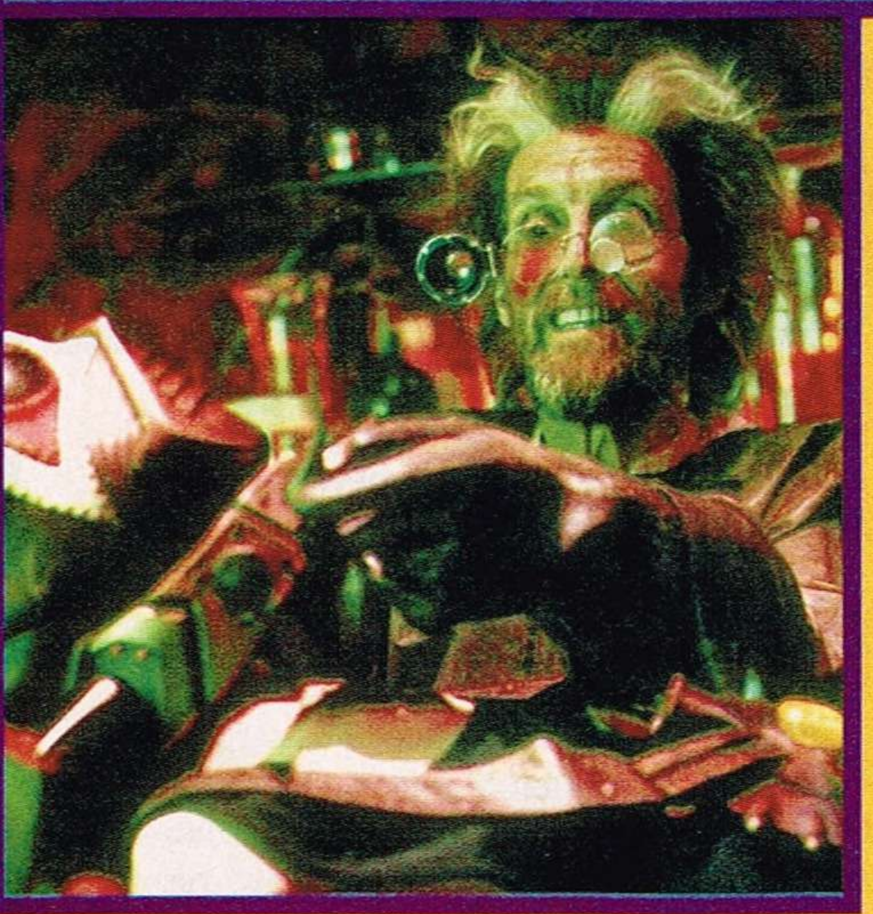
All Batman Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1997 DC Comics. Photos Courtesy Warner Bros.

A girl needs a big, strong man around the house to do the heavy lifting for her, and Uma Thurman's Poison Ivy has Bane, played by Jeep Swenson.

Commissioner Gordon (Pat Hingle) once again calls upon the Dynamic Duo for help. He'll need it.



"Michael Keaton was an excellent Batman



"Life's grim enough! And they *are* called 'comic' books!" exclaims Schumacher of his take on the Batman myth.

"We've got two male partners involved with a woman. That plot dynamic determines much of what transpires between Batman and Robin. The basic storyline at Wayne Manor revolves around family and trust, but once they put on those costumes and run up against the bad guys, sparks are going to fly."

Goldsman began hammering out a first-draft script in August 1995, eyeing September 1996 for the start of filming. In a true collaboration, the *Batman & Robin* script evolved out of countless meetings with many people. "There were tons of pages rather than actual drafts, which evolved out of meetings with effects people, producers and actors. Once I cast a movie, I really like to mold the part to the actor and get their ideas and input. Akiva is very good at working with that kind of situation. Each person hired had their own ideas and we all worked together to create their characters. The script was the result of a whole lot of people who successfully embellished each other."

Casting *Batman & Robin* was made relatively painless by the fact that most of the previous film's cast was back on board. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Thurman were at the top of Schumacher's wish list, and Alicia Silverstone was not too far behind. But the key continued to be Clooney weighing in as a particularly real Batman and Bruce Wayne.

"I've been searching for the perfect Batman from the beginning and, as great as Val was, I thought he was a little on the young side. The age difference between Val and Chris [O'Donnell] was not that great and, consequently, their relationship in the last film was not as dynamic as it could have been. George turned out to be perfect as a mid-30s, handsome, billionaire, bachelor playboy. He also came across as a very studly Batman. But ultimately, what George adds that none of the other actors could get across is an enormous sense of humanity and accessibility. He's not so much the dark, brooding Batman as he is a *real* man."

Once filming started, Schumacher recalls taking great pains to ease the cast into the madcap process. "I decided to start the first week of filming with the more intimate scenes in Wayne Manor. Since we had a new Bruce Wayne in George and we were introducing Alicia as Batgirl, and they had to mesh with veterans like Chris and Michael Gough, we decided to start with the family scenes. Everything during that first week was quiet and intimate, and it gave the actors the chance to be as normal as they could be in this movie before they put on the rubber and the makeup and jumped into the madness of this movie."

The "madness" comes flooding back to Schumacher in snippets of thought rather than detailed anecdotes. He recalls that both Schwarzenegger and Thurman "really relished the evil they were portraying, were very mischievous in their approach and were really effective as a crime team." Of the chemistry between Clooney and O'Donnell, he relates, "It was a perfect match. You could believe their relationship on all levels." He says that "Alicia projects the perfect character with a mysterious double life." And then there were the action sequences that included a rooftop car chase, a skyboarding heartstopper and all manner of icy action moments.

"Sparks are going to fly," Schumacher promises of the epic clash between good and evil in *Batman & Robin*.

For Schumacher, Clooney filled out the Bat-suit just fine. "He came across as a very studly Batman."

Photo: Robert Isenberg

Val Kilmer was an excellent Batman, but I knew that George would be the best of all."

"I've never been what you would call a true action director," acknowledges Schumacher, "but I felt that with *Batman Forever* we brought great color to the franchise and made it more of a living comic book. I was determined to do action that could not possibly appear in any other movie. Action has never really been my comfort zone, and so that element of filmmaking has always been a challenge. We had enormous sets and enormous stunts and I was always worried that somebody was going to get hurt. But I always felt in control and never like I had gotten in over my head."

Behind the Cowl

Schumacher rarely shies away from tough questions, but he draws the line at the query about what he feels allows the filmmakers to change actors in the title role and still keep the audience. "If I quoted you the reasons, it would have to be very off the record." He does, however, explain the relationship between the Batman movies and Batman comics.

"I use the comics as my jumping-off point in making these films," he explains. "When I inherited the franchise, it was a little overwhelming. Then, I went to a comic book store and was amazed to find out how many different versions of Batman there were. There were lighter versions, darker versions, Gothic versions and vampire versions. There has been a new Batman and four or five Robins. The comic book audience has been real flexible in going along with these different versions, and so I felt confident taking Batman away from the dark, brooding tones of the first two films."

But he strongly defends the notion that the Batman franchise, in his hands, has moved far away from the initial Gothic premise pioneered by Tim Burton in *Batman* and *Batman Returns*. "Batman is still in Gotham City. There's still murder and mayhem and people with dark, twisted pasts. It always felt to me that Tim Burton's movies were influenced by Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Returns*. That was quite a departure for Batman and I loved it. But I feel I've gone back to the basics with the Batman films and am much more in the tradition of all the comic books that came in the past. There certainly are dark elements in these films because there are always dark elements in Batman. But God, life's grim enough! And they *are* called 'comic' books!"

A project long rumored to be on Schumacher's to-do list is the film musical version of *Phantom of the Opera*, in conjunction with Andrew Lloyd Webber. The collaboration was supposed to happen after Schumacher completed *Flatliners*, and the duo actually did spend a year prepping the film, which was slated to be shot in Munich and Prague.

"It got cancelled because Andrew went through a divorce and the rights to *Phantom* got tied up in the divorce settlement. So, I went on with my life. Andrew has called on several occasions, trying to get me involved again, but for me the project has sailed. Besides, I feel that with *Batman*, I've gotten to make *Phantom* and, in a way, maybe this has been a better *Phantom* for me."

Seven weeks into *Batman & Robin*, Warners execs were so impressed that they immediately ordered a script for *Batman 5*. Schumacher agreed to supervise the writing of scripter Mark Protosevich, "but my feeling is, don't count your sequels before they hatch. I've got to see if audiences like *Batman & Robin*. If we make another one and George and Chris agree to do it, then of course I'll come back and direct. But first I want to make sure I haven't disappointed the audience on this one. If people go, 'Joel, it's time to hang up the cowl,' then *why* would I do another one?"

And Joel Schumacher has more than a nodding acquaintance with the trademark Batman headpiece. "Of course I've tried on the cowl. I try not to ask actors to do too many things that I wouldn't try myself. And I found that wearing the Bat-cowl is agony. You can't hear. You can't breathe. There's black makeup around your eyes so even your skin can't breathe. The cape weighs 40 pounds and the whole thing pulls real hard on the neck and back.

"The cowl looks great," he says. "But it comes with a heavy price."